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**Economic and environmental questions: Assistance to
third States affected by the application of sanctions**

Assistance to third States affected by the application of sanctions

Note by the Secretary-General

1. On 19 November 2002, the General Assembly adopted resolution 57/25, entitled "Implementation of the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations related to assistance to third States affected by the application of sanctions". In paragraph 8 of that resolution, the General Assembly took note of the decision of the Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 2000/32 of 28 July 2000, to continue its consideration of the question of assistance to third States affected by the application of sanctions, invited the Council, at its organizational session for 2003, to make appropriate arrangements for this purpose within its programme of work for 2003, and decided to transmit the most recent report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the provisions of the Charter related to assistance to third States affected by the application of sanctions, together with the relevant background materials, to the Council at its substantive session of 2003.

2. Pursuant to the provisions of Economic and Social Council resolution 2000/32 and of General Assembly resolution 57/25, the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations related to assistance to third States affected by the application of sanctions (A/57/165 and Add.1) will be made available to the Council at its substantive session of 2003.

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Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda

**Operational activities of the United Nations for international
development cooperation: follow-up to policy recommendations
of the General Assembly and the Council**

Operational activities of the United Nations for international development cooperation

Assessment of the lessons learned by United Nations organizations from evaluation activities at the field level

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report responds to paragraph 56 of General Assembly resolution 56/201, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to carry out an impartial and independent assessment of the extent to which the United Nations funds, programmes and agencies at the field level learn lessons from their evaluations, and to formulate proposals on how to improve the feedback mechanisms at the field level, and requested the Secretary-General to report to the Economic and Social Council at its 2003 substantive session on this matter. After analysing the factors that determine the demand and the supply for these lessons learned as they become manifested at the country level, the report provides an assessment of how the United Nations system makes use of available evaluations at the country level, on the basis of information made available by evaluation offices and relevant country-level evidence, focusing on the strengths and weaknesses of two processes: how the system identifies lessons to be learned at the country level and how the system disseminates these lessons, once identified. After reaching conclusions on the basis of analysis of the current practice in different parts of the system, the report suggests a few recommendations to the Council on how to enhance the evaluation function and its use at the country level, through measures that regard the individual organization or collaboration among the parts of the United Nations system, as a means of increasing the effectiveness of United Nations development cooperation.



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I. Background and context

1. The present report responds to paragraph 56 of General Assembly resolution 56/201, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to carry out an impartial and independent assessment of the extent to which the United Nations funds, programmes and agencies at the field level learn lessons from their evaluations and to formulate proposals on how to improve the feedback mechanisms at the field level, and requested the Secretary-General to report to the Economic and Social Council at its 2003 substantive session in that regard. The General Assembly's concern stemmed at least partly from the conclusions of the Secretary-General's reports to the 1998 and 2001 triennial comprehensive policy reviews. Both reports noted weaknesses in the institutional memory at the field level.¹

2. Improved and more effective development cooperation requires continuous updating of knowledge of the development process and greater awareness of the outcomes of past development cooperation activities that took place in the country or other relevant situations. All United Nations organizations involved in country-level activities need a capacity to retain lessons gained from past experience, enhance their institutional memory and analyse, assess and understand the content and directions of development dynamics in order to optimize the impact of their interventions.

3. Linkages between the evaluation function of each agency and improvements in its effectiveness, however, cannot always be assumed. Evaluation activities exert a positive influence at the country level only when evaluation is a real source of good judgement, is timely, is substantively relevant in development terms, and when its cost is justified and its outcomes are actually used by those who can benefit from them.

4. How does the effectiveness of United Nations development cooperation activities at the country level depend on the system's capacity to build on past activities and their performance, including failures? By learning from the past, system organizations can reorient the design of their operations, adjust their implementation modalities and assess the validity of their geographical, functional and strategic priorities, in order to reach the ultimate result of better servicing the beneficiaries of United Nations development support.

5. In the international development community there has been increased recognition that most United Nations entities are knowledge organizations and that there is potential, as yet unrealized, to leverage that knowledge and use it more wisely and effectively. A number of United Nations organizations have been making systematic efforts to become "learning organizations", echoing an approach increasingly being adopted in civil society and the private sector, and seek to improve their management of the knowledge that they possess.

6. This coincides with an increasing interest in evaluation as a source of lessons, as well as an instrument of accountability. Improving use of the knowledge and wisdom to be gleaned from evaluations is only one aspect of this larger process, which endeavours to make use of the lessons learned through a variety of activities other than evaluation.²

7. Improving knowledge management is a major and ongoing key task for any individual United Nations entity that undertakes it. Given the nature of their work,

the organizations cannot easily learn clear lessons from their own activities. This task becomes even more difficult when dealing with collective learning by the United Nations system at the country level. In fact, the system's cooperation with Member States, whether in a convening, norm setting, advocacy or operational role, is not always amenable to cost-benefit analysis, making it sometimes difficult to provide precise answers to questions about the performance of the United Nations system.

8. Lessons can be obtained from sources other than evaluation, such as monitoring, technical appraisals, reviews and audits. Guidance manuals are often used as a disseminating device to turn past experience into wisdom for future action at the country level. Training activities, including workshops, retreats, the establishment of networks and other exchanges of experience, the use of agency or inter-agency web sites or discussion forums, are all-important means of sharing lessons.

9. The approach adopted in preparing the present report involved the fullest participation of the United Nations system in searching for data, carrying out analysis and generating proposals for improvements. The views of each organization as to their current practices with regard to lesson learning from evaluation and application of the results, as well as proposals for improving learning at the field level were sought and taken into account.

10. In order to facilitate the consultation process with the United Nations system, an ad hoc inter-agency task force on lessons learned from evaluation activities was established under the Inter-Agency Working Group on Evaluation. Exchanges with other organizations of the system not directly involved in the ad hoc inter-agency task force were also undertaken. The inputs of all these sources have been drawn upon. Information and analysis was sought from the United Nations country teams in Bolivia, Bangladesh, China, Ethiopia and the Philippines. This has helped give greater depth to the picture of current practices provided by the responses received from the United Nations system. An independent consultant reviewed the data coming from the United Nations agencies, funds and programmes and the suggestions emanating from the ad hoc inter-agency task force. He also provided recommendations, which were used as an input to the present report, on how the United Nations system could best improve feedback and lesson learning at the field level.

11. The volume of evidence available within the system and the variety of relevant information that could be found within each organization and/or within each country-level situation, suggested to the ad hoc task force that the present report should only be a first step. Reflection on this subject should continue in the months ahead in the context of the 2004 Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review and its expected follow-up, and should continue to rely on collaboration with the Inter-Agency Working Group on Evaluation.

II. Demand for and supply of lessons from evaluation

12. Demand for lessons learned from evaluation is expressed by many entities: the headquarters of United Nations system organizations, their country-level officers, recipient countries (both at the governmental and non-governmental levels), donors and other external partners. The demand is a function of the intended use of lessons

learned and, at the country level, is mainly to assist both national authorities and United Nations system managers in making decisions about designing or approving new development initiatives, at the project, programme, sector, system and national levels, or about renewing or extending past activities. The demand has also been driven by the need to demonstrate results achieved.

13. The demand for lessons from evaluation has been changing as the content and context of operational activities have been evolving. The focus of evaluations has shifted along a spectrum of concerns, away from input-oriented accountability towards strategic and policy issues and questions of development success. Local managers, both national and United Nations, need guidance about their programme strategies and policies, their consistency and coordination and their contribution to global goals and to frameworks such as Sector Wide Approaches or the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF). This guidance may come from many sources, including from the findings of evaluations.

14. Recently, the United Nations Millennium Declaration has been providing a comprehensive framework of development priorities for developing countries and the United Nations system, for which financial resources must be mobilized and human resources need to be assigned. This affects the demand for lessons learned. The Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed goals provide an organizing principle, determining the most important issues for which lessons and learning are needed.

15. The demand for lessons from evaluation is also affected by the differences in what the field and headquarters, and what the United Nations system and external stakeholders expect from evaluations. United Nations country teams naturally perceive evaluations that are functionally linked to country-level plans and programmes as more relevant to their decision-making processes than evaluations that go beyond country concerns. The latter are often perceived as external to managers, who prefer either self-evaluations or strongly participatory evaluations. A perception of an evaluation as external to the work of local managers tends to limit the local appreciation of its value. Lessons of evaluations sought by managers are probably more easily absorbed than those of evaluations that are carried out in response to other stimuli. On the other hand, many past evaluations of projects or groupings of projects, while dealing with substantive and managerial issues that were of immediate concern to managers at the field level, often had only limited application beyond the immediate focus of the project(s).

16. The supply of lessons is also evolving. There is a variety of information that can be retrieved from evaluations depending on their focus. The project used to be the basic unit for delivery of United Nations operational activities and to be the fundamental organizational arrangement that defined objectives and resources. Lessons learned exclusively from such project contexts were necessarily limited. The larger issues of development policy could only rarely be addressed. More recently, the programme approach and a greater integration into the sectoral plans and national frameworks or systems of the country concerned have become the norm.³ This makes it easier to make observations and draw lessons about larger topics.

17. The need to monitor the implementation of the Millennium Declaration also affects the supply of lessons learned, since United Nations specialized agencies are expected to collect data and analyse them in relation to the indicators that have been

developed to monitor progress towards the attainment of the Millennium Goals. Specialized agencies are often the source best placed to make qualitative judgements about these indicators, and should be the most appropriate suppliers of lessons learned that are relevant to monitoring the development achievements summarized in the Millennium Goals. Their inputs should contribute to a comprehensive lesson learning strategy for the United Nations system.

18. Any good evaluation system will handle these competing claims (demand) for evaluation results at different levels and compare them with the available supply, realizing that evaluation ultimately has to satisfy the requirements of accountability, better programme management and lesson learning. To accomplish these tasks, the United Nations organizations should be enabled to use a wide array of evaluation approaches appropriate to each task, it being recognized that evaluation is a flexible tool that adjusts to different purposes and is not a ritual. Those in charge of the evaluation function need to consider the requirements of different users, including managers of development cooperation activities and other stakeholders, who call for qualitative and quantitative information and analysis, whether at the country, regional or global level, and to establish on that basis priority areas to be addressed and select approaches suitable to each area. The needs of field-level managers, of their national colleagues and the wider needs of the international development community need to be balanced in defining the appropriate evaluation strategy and the combination of analysis and information required.

19. These issues have been the subject of reflection on the part of major contributors to development cooperation activities, in particular bilateral agencies, which have also devoted considerable attention to lesson learning and feedback. A workshop on evaluation feedback for effective learning and accountability, organized by the DAC/OECD in Tokyo in 2000, noted that some of the key challenges facing evaluation departments included:

Resolving the contradictions between the dual roles of evaluation feedback — learning and accountability;

Responding to the shift from project evaluations to the new generation of broader based evaluations focusing on themes or sectors;

Further improving dissemination strategies;

Finding better ways of institutionalizing lesson learning;

Reinforcing the reputation of evaluation units as a source of useful learning;

Increasing participation and stakeholder involvement in evaluations, without sacrificing core evaluation principles;

Responding to the growing problem of information overload.

The main opportunities identified were:

Harnessing the Internet as a means of improving transparency and facilitating lesson learning within and between agencies;

Tapping into the new organizational management agendas of "knowledge management" and "managing for results" to enhance learning and accountability;

Responding to the wider challenge presented to development agencies by the international development goals.

20. The above considerations focus on management and accountability issues, which affect the efficiency and effectiveness of development cooperation activities and apply to all forms of international development support. The evaluation of United Nations operational activities, however, has a few complex features that require special consideration, because of the role of the United Nations as an advocate and as a catalyst of developing countries' efforts to pursue globally or regionally agreed goals. Evaluation of the effectiveness of United Nations system activities should be able to identify both lessons and good practices that may assist Member States in pursuing policies or programmes that move towards those goals and policies or programmes that have a direct bearing on the immediate impact of operational activities.

III How does a system like that of the United Nations learn lessons?

21. In the present report a distinction is drawn between evaluation findings and recommendations on the one hand and lessons learned on the other, although in practice this distinction may be blurred. Some evaluation experts have in fact argued that lesson learning is synonymous with best practices and that neither is a very operational term. "High quality lessons learned represent principles extrapolated from multiple sources and independently triangulated to increase transferability as cumulative knowledge or working hypotheses that can be adapted and applied to new situations. One of the challenges facing the profession of evaluation going forward will be to bring some rigour to these popular notions of 'lessons learned' and 'best practices'."⁴

22. To differentiate between the outcomes of evaluations and lessons learned, this report takes it that the findings and recommendations of an evaluation deal with the specific issues the evaluators were asked to address, while lessons learned represent judgements or generalizations about issues that go beyond the limits of the topic of a single evaluation. Lessons can be inferred from a single evaluation, but more likely from a group of evaluations or from evaluation of a larger entity such as a sector(s) or a programme(s). The wider the ambitions of the programme or project, the greater the scope for generalizations to be drawn from them.

23. A wide variety of material is presented by different parts of the United Nations system as lessons learned. Its quality and practical relevance also varies.⁵ There are no agreed criteria for differentiating good lessons from less worthy ones or for establishing a strategy for producing the former and discarding the latter. For operational activities, one criterion could be the extent to which a lesson advances the "shared" understanding of key actors, either with regard to an issue or their ability to deal with it.

24. Different audiences learn lessons in different forms. There are several audiences at the country level: (a) the United Nations system itself; (b) its national partners in government and in civil society; (c) the country's international partners — bilateral donors, other multilateral organizations and international non-governmental organizations; and (d) the direct beneficiaries of the development

support initiatives, if they are not included in the previous categories. These different audiences may have different capacities to appreciate and absorb lessons. The United Nations system and the country's partners should be capable of taking advantage of all the facilities of the information society. For the country itself, depending on where it is situated relative to the digital divide, this capability may not necessarily be adequate, in terms of both learning and, more importantly, diffusing or having access to lessons. Such diversity of audiences and their receptivity needs to be reflected carefully in the design and operation of the evaluation systems applied to United Nations development cooperation activities.

25. There are procedural changes which can promote lesson learning at the field level. For example, the introduction of UNDAF in the first reform programme of the Secretary-General gave impetus to collective learning. In isolated instances, joint midterm programme reviews carried out by United Nations country teams in the 1990s promoted some synergy and system learning in the countries concerned. But until the introduction of UNDAF and then the Millennium Goals, there were not enough generally accepted common goals and common tasks around which country teams could coalesce their learning and knowledge sharing efforts. Mechanisms such as joint midterm reviews and terminal evaluations of UNDAF⁶ and country programmes should promote substantive lesson learning at the field level, both by the United Nations system and the Governments and societies they support, since the Millennium Goals and other similar goals provide a solid and consistent framework of priorities.

26. Another example of procedural change would be joint evaluation planning, undertaken in consultation with the relevant national authorities, which would address the most pressing needs for information and would provide valuable insight as to how best to obtain that information, whether by relying on monitoring, self-evaluation or more independent evaluation. Similarly, the work to measure achievements in terms of Millennium Goals can also be the foundation for new joint evaluation plans.

27. How much does it cost to learn lessons from evaluations? What share of evaluation resources is devoted to converting evaluation results into lessons learned? And how effectively are these resources used in the United Nations system? The average total direct costs of evaluation activities for a sample of Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries is 0.22 per cent of their budget.⁷ There is no readily available breakdown for most United Nations entities of how much of their evaluation budgets is devoted to extracting lessons and how much is spent on disseminating them. Furthermore, there is little evidence that the cost of generating lessons has been analysed or that any estimate of the resulting benefits has been made, either for the countries concerned or for United Nations organizations. At a time when concern is being focused on achieving the Millennium Goals and other similar goals, and when the United Nations system should be sharing its experience on how to pursue them in the most cost-effective way, more attention to the economics of lesson learning may be appropriate, although non-financial considerations should also be factored in.

IV. Assessment of current practices

28. Wide differences in evaluation capacities, policies and practices across the United Nations funds, programmes and agencies reflect the diverse set of tasks to which they are mandated to respond. From the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to the World Intellectual Property Organization and the World Tourism Organization, United Nations organizations have very different needs and mechanisms for using evaluation as a formal means of developing lessons learned.

29. A review of prevailing practices within the United Nations system reveals the following emerging characteristics of how evaluation is used to generate lessons learned at the country level.

(a) Most organizations (with the exception of the smaller specialized agencies) have a formal process which identifies the need for and carries out evaluations at the project, programme and thematic levels.

(b) Many organizations are making efforts to decentralize the process of planning and implementing project evaluations. As a result, field staff may exert considerable influence in the identification of which projects will be evaluated. The information provided, however, does not show whether there is an increasing trend towards decentralization, although there is a stated intent to decentralize the evaluation functions in many United Nations organizations. Where authority for project evaluation is decentralized, the larger organizations also provide guidance in the form of guidelines, procedural manuals and technical support from a centralized evaluation unit.

(c) In some organizations the demand for evaluation by field staff is increasing. The demand for project (and sometimes programme) evaluation studies is one measure of the relevance and utility of the evaluation function. The quality and rigour of project evaluations, however, vary significantly across agencies and countries. Therefore, raw numbers of project evaluations commissioned may not provide an accurate gauge of either demand for evaluation or performance of the evaluation function and require closer examination.

(d) Despite the common practice of decentralizing project (and sometimes programme) evaluations, almost all United Nations organizations have concentrated their small cadre of professional evaluation staff at the headquarters level, with very few professional evaluators in regional or country office positions.

(e) Country programme evaluations are more likely to be scheduled and managed by headquarters evaluation units in accordance with the country programme planning and implementation cycle, although they require strong involvement of field staff. As organizations (for example the World Food Programme) establish enhanced country programme planning processes, they tend to place more emphasis on evaluation of country programmes and country strategies.

(f) Similarly, thematic evaluations in such areas as gender equality, poverty alleviation or aid coordination are most often scheduled and managed by headquarters evaluation units in response to demands from either executive management or the organization's governing body.

(g) Some United Nations entities have also been undertaking policy and strategy evaluations. These are designed and managed by headquarters units, and may also engage independent consultants and experts. These units are also responsible for the dissemination of the results.

(h) Most organizations are making use of national consultants from developing countries to carry out evaluations and are making efforts to expand and diversify national evaluation capacity. These efforts are sometimes assisted by the development of local professional associations for evaluators.

(i) Many organizations are placing increasing emphasis on self-evaluation by project and programme staff, although this gives rise to concerns about ensuring the quality of evaluation work and possible problems in ensuring accountability. Self-evaluation is not new to the United Nations system and is not being advanced as the sole methodology or approach for evaluation at the country level. It can be combined with external evaluations.⁸ Agencies are placing greater emphasis on self-evaluation as one of the key tools available for evaluation at country level, in the framework of efforts to increase the participation of field staff in evaluation work.

(j) Similarly, many organizations are placing increasing priority on the use of participatory evaluation methods, so that key stakeholders, including beneficiaries, have more of a sense of ownership of evaluation results (and are more likely to implement findings).⁹

(k) There is a significant move among several United Nations system organizations and many other donor agencies to focus on results-based management, which is going to affect the role of evaluation activities as a means to assess the achievement of results.¹⁰

(l) There is very little reported evaluation activity by the United Nations system as a whole at the country level. Some agency evaluations (e.g. in the case of UNDP and UNICEF) are fed into system-wide processes such as the common country assessment and UNDAF, but the reported level of joint evaluation work for these processes remains low, although there is an opportunity to collaborate on the assessment of UNDAF outcomes. Inter-agency cooperation on evaluation can be promoted through such channels as the Inter-Agency Working Group on Evaluation. The recent introduction by the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) of instruments such as the UNDAF results matrix, the UNDAF monitoring and evaluation plan and the UNDAF final evaluations show possible directions for progress.¹¹

(m) There are examples of United Nations organizations participating in multi-agency reviews and evaluative mechanisms such as annual review missions associated with sector-wide approaches (SWAPs), often coordinated by the World Bank and the national Government, with the involvement of the appropriate regional development bank, the most active bilateral agencies and selected participating United Nations agencies.¹²

V. Identifying lessons learned from evaluations: strengths and weaknesses

30. Some, but by no means all, United Nations organizations invest in documenting and synthesizing lessons learned from evaluations carried out at the project, programme and thematic levels. Nonetheless, this remains an area of weakness. Agency evaluation units report that not enough efforts are invested in it.

31. This problem is also linked to the volume of agency-specific evaluations undertaken at the country level, which is considerable and includes hundreds of projects that are evaluated annually, each supplemented by dozens of country programme evaluations and a significant number of thematic reviews and evaluations. Such a high volume of activity explains why there is such a large stock of under-examined and under-exploited material available in the evaluation reports.

32. There is limited capacity to identify lessons learned and this is a major cause of the limited institutional memory of the United Nations system at the field level. A few studies conducted on the overall effectiveness of the system at the country level¹³ confirm the inadequacy of its institutional memory of past lessons. A consultation with the country team of Bolivia confirms this concern, as reflected in the findings of an evaluation conducted by that country team on inter-agency coordination (see box 1).

Box 1

Institutional memory at the country level

"Among the challenges we have to mention are coordination which is a time consuming and not very effective process. There is also little institutional memory, which makes the sustainability of work in common difficult".

From "The experience of interagency coordination in Bolivia"
United Nations Country Team, La Paz 2002, p. 22. (Unofficial translation)

Strengths of lesson learning processes

33. In spite of these inadequacies, the current practice of learning lessons from evaluations shows some considerable strengths. The potential benefits should not be neglected, since most organizations have set up, in a reasonably comprehensive way, evaluation processes, which allow for coverage, over time, of the bulk of their activities through project, programme and thematic evaluations, whether they are undertaken as formative evaluations, mid-term evaluations or, less often, as ex post facto evaluations. There is a significant and growing body of information, which might be expected to give rise to lessons learned at country level that can be generalized.

34. Strengths of current evaluation practice in terms of lesson learning include:

- (i) Evaluation is often decentralized and linked to demand from local managers and country offices (for project evaluations) and from headquarters

managers and governing bodies (for country programme evaluations and thematic studies);

- (ii) Current practice often relies on external evaluators or mixed teams of external and internal evaluators in an effort to preserve independence and ensure accountability;
- (iii) Increasing emphasis is being placed on the use of local evaluators;
- (iv) Evaluations are participatory, or at least consultative, allowing for inputs by key stakeholders, including project and programme beneficiaries; this increases national ownership of results;
- (v) Considerable efforts are being made by headquarters evaluation units to develop and update manuals, guidelines, tools and instruments, and to produce generic terms of reference, as a means of ensuring the quality of the evaluation process, although the added value of these efforts has not yet been assessed;
- (vi) A small number of United Nations organizations use evaluation lessons learned in the preparation of CCAs and UNDAFs and will make use of them in the collective evaluation of UNDAF outcomes.

Weaknesses of processes for identifying lessons

35. There are some important weaknesses in the way in which United Nations system organizations generate lessons learned from their own evaluations:

- (i) Most organizations rely on a very small staff of headquarters-based professionals to plan, manage, support and synthesize the results of their evaluation activities, thus contributing to the under-utilization of lessons learned.
- (ii) There is a lack of evaluation capacity at the country level. Although headquarters may support field staff with manuals and guidelines for project and programme evaluation, which may be revised often, these support tools may not be well used at the country level, either because of their inadequacy or because training and other forms of required support are not provided.¹⁴
- (iii) Little time and effort is devoted to the process of documenting and synthesizing lessons learned from evaluations at the country level. Even if a given evaluation produces an important lesson for future projects and programmes, that lesson will often not be documented, collated with other lessons and communicated to other parts of the organization.
- (iv) The process used to incorporate lessons learned from evaluations in training courses and other corporate learning mechanisms (such as interactive and web-based learning modules) is very lengthy and often requires changes in formal management policies and practices.
- (v) Evaluation results are not well disseminated across projects, offices and organizational units — especially when those units are organized on geographic lines or have a different thematic focus.
- (vi) There is still a view, reported by field office staff in some organizations, that the bulk of evaluation activity (despite efforts to decentralize) is imposed

by headquarters units on country offices and represents a distraction from their ongoing and high priority policy and programme work.

(vii) While organizational evaluation policy and practice increasingly recognize the relevance of country programme processes and the need for evaluation at the country programme level, the vast majority of this effort is confined to specific agencies. There is not enough recognition (with some exceptions) of the need for evaluations to address significant development policy issues and to develop system-wide lessons learning at the country level.

36. The weaknesses point to two challenges:

(a) How to develop a culture of evaluation at the country office level so that evaluation efforts are valued as a means of improving effectiveness and lessons are learned and retained?

(b) How to develop evaluation approaches and methods which are efficient and timely and provide perceived value added at the field level for both country offices and Governments?

VI. Disseminating lessons learned

37. Most of the organizations reviewed have at least some elements of a planned process for communicating and disseminating lessons learned from evaluations to potential users at the country office, headquarters and, occasionally, global community level.

38. The reported weakness in identifying, documenting and synthesizing lessons learned implies that communication strategies begin with a considerable handicap. Without a systematic effort to address this problem, any attempt to generalize good practices to other projects, programmes and thematic areas through improved dissemination will fail.

39. Most organizations reviewed highlight the strong link between lessons learned and best practices. Many see the main function of lesson learning activities as the dissemination of identified best practices across projects, programmes and organizational units at both the country office and headquarters levels. This interpretation may limit effectiveness in developing lessons from evaluations since the identification of best practices may entail very difficult methodological problems. How can it be determined that one lesson is "better" than another? There are no general criteria to apply. No optimization technique can be easily applied in such a pragmatic context. This is why some agencies started preferring the expression "good practices", which does not require any ranking between different lessons, rather than claiming that specific evaluation studies, for example of pilot projects, single out best practices. The notion of "best practices" sometimes suggested that there are success stories that could be replicated in unaltered terms in other circumstances. Experience shows that this is not a practical approach to lesson learning.

40. Sometimes lessons learned through evaluations point out weaknesses, pitfalls, problems and generally bad practices which should be avoided in developing and implementing projects and programmes at the country level. These negative lessons

should presumably be communicated and disseminated, as well as success stories. The system and its organizations can learn from both.

41. The decentralization of operational responsibilities to country offices in several organizations of the United Nations system is also generating additional concern for the ability to learn from evaluation at the country level, since country-level offices are often overwhelmed with their new responsibilities and this may limit their ability to assimilate lessons learned. Evaluation results may be reviewed by country-level officers, but not necessarily "learned", unless this assimilation process takes place in the concrete context of specific tasks. Country officers are more likely to learn lessons through evaluations when they are involved in certain assignments that are more conducive to the use of lessons learned, or the search for good practices, and are looking for suggestions how to orient future action. This is the case when they are involved in the development of country strategies or country programmes, or in similarly challenging exercises.

42. Fairly systematic and multi-layered processes have sometimes been developed and implemented for communicating and disseminating evaluation results to the country office, headquarters and global levels. While no organizations claim to have found an ideal system for disseminating evaluation results, many use a mix of the following features:

(a) Country-level workshops, which may include staff of the sponsoring United Nations agency, the host Government, NGOs and civil society organizations, and bilateral and multilateral cooperating agencies, aimed at discussing evaluation results and their application;

(b) Publication of evaluation reports in international languages and in the language of the country concerned;

(c) Development of newsletters, précis and information sheets;

(d) Compilation of annual evaluation reports at the agency level and their incorporation in results-oriented annual reports of the agency or in similar compilations;

(e) Discussion among agency staff of the synthesized results of evaluation activities at annual consultations at the national, regional and headquarters levels;¹⁵

(f) Posting of lessons learned from evaluation, evaluation reports, synthesis reports and evaluation abstracts on organizational intranets in order to make them easily available at the country office and headquarters levels;

(g) The use of Internet gateways or web sites so that evaluation reports, abstracts and syntheses of lessons learned are made available to the wider global community.¹⁶

43. For many organizations, the effort to use web-based methods and electronic databases (including distribution of reports, abstracts and lessons learned on CD-ROMs) in order to communicate lessons learned is bound up with the issue of "knowledge management", which often includes "knowledge sharing", the illustration of strategies and processes for communicating and the dissemination of lessons learned from evaluation.

44. This report has not included a review of planned and implemented knowledge management systems in United Nations organizations. It should be noted, however,

that, while many of the responses received from organizations of the system describe knowledge management mainly in terms of the use of modern information technology to construct easily searchable databases and to distribute information through electronic networks and discussion groups, recent management literature describes knowledge management in much broader terms, including ways in which structured information is developed, sustained, communicated and used, and encompassing information on finances, human resources, governance, strategic planning, operations and results. Its most direct application is usually in the realm of information technology but is not limited to that realm.

45. Finally, it is important to note that a number of United Nations organizations play important roles in gathering and disseminating country-specific and global information on progress towards the achievement of development goals.¹⁷ These activities can also be used to disseminate lessons learned from evaluations, together with other relevant information. They involve, for the most part, technical cooperation with developing countries so that they can meet reporting requirements and publish regular updates on national and global progress.

46. As an example, the 2002 UNESCO report, *Education for All — Is the World on Track? EFA Global Monitoring Report 2002*, made use of the conclusions of several evaluations concerned with various national planning processes — UNDAF, the Comprehensive Development Framework (CDF), poverty reduction strategy papers and the Education for All (EFA) Plan — and includes a discussion of how these processes may or may not overburden the planning capacities of partner countries and may, or may not, be self-reinforcing or conflicting.

47. On the whole, the way in which United Nations system organizations plan and implement strategies for communicating and disseminating the lessons learned from evaluations at the country and headquarters level is not adequate. While most organizations make some use of the elements listed above (workshops, publications of all types, intranets, extranets, gateways, CD-ROMs, etc.), few have developed a comprehensive and systematic approach to communicating and disseminating the results (including lessons learned) of evaluations.

48. Observations based on information from both headquarters and country-level sources have pointed out:

(a) The lack of sufficient investment in identifying, documenting and synthesizing lessons learned from evaluations;

(b) The tendency for lessons learned to be shared only within specific projects, programmes and organizational units;

(c) The excessive length of time it takes for evaluations to be planned, carried out, reviewed, vetted and revised before the reports are available to be scanned for lessons learned. This time becomes even longer, if the delay in transforming lessons learned into corporate learning is included, with the result that there is a long lag time between the identification of a lesson in a specific study and its entry into the collective information base of the organization concerned.

49. One limitation is that country-level evaluations often do not cover or involve all the active elements of the United Nations system that are relevant for those specific evaluations. This affects the dissemination of their outcomes at the system-wide level. Similarly, the absence of multi-organization evaluations of United

Nations system effectiveness at the country-level suggests that there will be a corresponding absence of lessons learned at that level.

VII. Some proposals for better learning from evaluations

50. Some good practices already in use in different parts of the system have emanated from the consultations so far completed. They suggest the need for:

- (i) A strong commitment by senior management to organizational learning and to holding managers accountable for taking lessons learned into account in designing or revising activities;
- (ii) Enhancing the independence of the office managing evaluations and producing lessons, as well as giving it adequate resources;
- (iii) Recognizing that top priority for a more effective use of lessons learned is the definition of a core group of stakeholders interested in each major evaluation as target audiences and the definition of evaluation products that will be directed to those audiences, including high quality summaries and insights;
- (iv) Preparing a management response to each major evaluation, along with monitorable proposals for follow-up;
- (v) Systematic organization of a wide dissemination of the evaluation findings and lessons, in accessible summary formats;
- (vi) Establishing communities of practice, including through the use of information and communications technology platforms;
- (vii) Recognizing that new evaluation tools should be developed to learn lessons in new areas of concern, including greater use of joint evaluations and intelligent use of Internet and intranet facilities;
- (viii) Greater and more systematic use of self-evaluation, with the application of appropriate evaluation methods;
- (ix) Allocating adequate resources to extracting lessons from evaluations.

51. Some of these suggestions reflect the outcome of field consultations. Box 2, in particular, reproduces a proposal from one member of the country team in China for a permanent national evaluation capacity working towards the twin goals of ongoing programme improvement and strengthening national evaluation capacity through learning by doing.

Box 2

Permanent evaluation: a proposal from UNIDO China

"One of the most effective ways to improve the operations of a given multilateral organization at the country level (in particular one with limited size, financial and human resources) seems to be through the establishment of what could be tentatively called a permanent evaluation/revision process of its operations. ... The final objective is the establishment within any given organization, as an integral part of its operations, of a permanent learning environment, and to avoid reacting only upon the result of a given [and sporadic] evaluation exercise. ... The amount of human resources involved is not small and qualified people cost. However, it seems also possible to explore new [non-conventional] avenues to do the exercises at affordable prices. In this office, the work is being done in cooperation with selected universities, which pay for the major costs of the staff involved. Informal agreements have been reached on an experimental basis and, at the end of three years of operation, a total of approximately 50.0 w/m (working/months) have been provided by young professionals who have just finished their MSc/PhD programmes. All the prospective and continuous revision of operations is being done with the assistance of these staff. It is time consuming, but the results, so far, have been positive and rewarding, at practically no additional cost to the Organization."

VIII. Some concluding observations

52. Evaluation in the United Nations system has multiple goals and lesson learning is recognized by agencies, funds and programmes as being important for each organization. Nevertheless, there has been less attention to, and success in, learning as a system. This hampers the effectiveness of the development support of the United Nations system to developing countries.

53. Lessons learned from evaluations are just one ingredient available at the country level for decision-making about economic and social policy. The level and complexity of knowledge from all sources for making those decisions is increasing so rapidly that it risks overwhelming both national policy makers and United Nations system managers. A strategy which takes account of these factors, both at the level of the system as a whole and of individual United Nations entities, would be helpful.

54. Many organizations in the system have devoted thought and effort to better management of the knowledge coming from their various monitoring and evaluation activities and have provided it to their field-based colleagues. Less thought and energy has been devoted to determining how United Nations country teams can learn collectively from evaluations and making such lessons available to recipient countries in user-oriented form.

55. Given the scarcity of resources for operational activities, conveying useful lessons may be one of the most cost-effective ways in which the United Nations development system can help countries achieve the Millennium Goals and other

similar goals. These lessons are more likely to be useful for that purpose if they are drawn from evaluations that deal with policy issues which countries face in achieving those global goals. Efforts to develop evaluation capacity in the United Nations system should take this into account.

56. The costs and benefits involved in lesson learning from evaluations and, in general, generating different kinds of lessons have not yet been estimated. The trade-off between carrying out evaluations and converting the outcomes of evaluations into useable knowledge needs further analysis to determine priority areas and issues that can most benefit from such emerging knowledge and the best methods to deliver lessons and have them absorbed.

57. A strategic approach by the United Nations system to deciding what benefits lessons learning can bring and where lessons can have the most effect should lead to a more useful and long-lasting application of its unique collective experience at the country level. In that respect, the Millennium Goals and other internationally agreed goals provide a practical starting point for reassessing the demand for and supply of lessons and for determining where lessons would be most useful.

58. Some United Nations system organizations plan to make greater use of participatory methods, especially involving beneficiaries, to design and implement evaluations. These initiatives should be encouraged and monitored systematically to see if they produce lessons that are more readily accepted and acted on at the field level.

59. Different countries have different propensities for learning from evaluation. Country teams should be sensitive to these differences and take full advantage of opportunities for building national capacity through learning by doing. Expanding the country team's support for evaluation capacity development at the national level may be a good way to promote cross-cutting lesson learning and absorption locally.

Recommendations

60. **The Council may wish to:**

(a) **Recommend that the General Assembly consider lessons learned at the country level from evaluation activities as part of the assessment of the overall effectiveness of the operational activities for development of the United Nations system at the next Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review;**

(b) **Recommend that the United Nations funds, programmes and specialized agencies make systematic efforts to enhance the capacity for identifying, documenting and synthesizing lessons learned from evaluation activities, in order to retain and absorb their results, and to ensure their dissemination at the country level and their use in the design and implementation of programmes and projects;**

(c) **Call upon all organizations of the United Nations system to make additional efforts to promote the development of national evaluation capacities, including capacities to make use of lessons learned from past United Nations activities that are relevant in each national context;**

(d) **Recommend that organizations of the United Nations system assist in national efforts to create country-level repositories of evaluation findings and lessons learned that are relevant in each national context, supporting national**

databases of evaluation lessons learned and the development of analysis, documentation, distillation and synthesis of those lessons learned, and promoting the development of publications and the use of other means of communication;

(e) Call upon relevant United Nations entities to assist national efforts to use information and communications technology to overcome limited access of recipient countries to lessons learned from evaluations, enhancing the countries' use of dissemination devices such as the Internet and other means of information and communication;

(f) Recommend that all organizations of the United Nations system consider lesson learning and dissemination as a specific required component of their annual plans, and identify who will be responsible for monitoring the effectiveness of the lesson learning process both at headquarters and at the country level;

(g) Encourage all organizations of the United Nations system undertaking operational activities for development to communicate the findings of evaluation activities and disseminate the corresponding lessons learned to national entities, including through more frequent use of local languages;

(h) Request the organizations of the United Nations system to encourage country teams to make greater use of lessons learned from evaluation in the preparation of the common country assessment, UNDAF and other relevant country documents, and to undertake measures to enhance country-level absorption of lessons learned, including through the intensification of joint activities such as the use of joint programme evaluations, joint mid-term reviews of country programmes under the UNDAF umbrella and joint support to national databases of lessons learned from evaluations.

Notes

¹ A/56/320, para. 60, and A/53/226, para. 29.

² A recent evaluation by UNDP of knowledge management issues noted: "From a broader perspective, the level and complexity of knowledge and approach to sharing it has changed considerably over the millennia. While there is much to be said for storytelling and fireside chats, such knowledge-sharing methods don't suffice when the level and complexity of needed knowledge is doubling with each generation. In particular, many new knowledge management technologies and methods have emerged in just the last two years, especially the explosive growth of the Internet." See "Review of the SURF system: way forward for knowledge management in UNDP", report prepared for Evaluation Office, UNDP, New York, July 2000, by Douglas Weidner and M. Shafique Rahman.

³ The move away from projects towards programmes and from expatriate enclaves towards efforts that are more fully integrated and "owned" by national entities is one example of successful lesson learning by the United Nations system.

⁴ "Evaluation, knowledge management, best practices, and high quality lessons learned", by Michael Quinn Patton, *American Journal of Evaluation*, vol. 22, No.3, 2001.

⁵ It is worth recalling examples of global lesson learning to which the United Nations system has contributed. Several entities of the system contributed to change the concept of poverty so that it now includes the dimensions of human capabilities and participation. Similarly, the current

attention to institutional issues and the evolution of the concept of capacity-building has benefited from the experience acquired by the United Nations system through development support activities.

⁶ The UNDG Task Force on Simplification and Harmonization is currently developing guidelines for the UNDAF Monitoring and Evaluation Plan and the UNDAF Final Evaluations which are expected to foster system-wide collaboration in evaluation activities related to this instrument.

⁷ See *A Review of Evaluation in DANIDA*, annex 5, by Hans Lundgren and others, January 2003.

⁸ Evidence of this dual approach was provided by a field mission to the Philippines. For example, in a consultation with the management committee of a multi-donor programme for peace and development in the island of Mindanao, the interaction between external evaluation and self-evaluation activities was significant, motivating country-level managers of the programme to generate further demand for external impact evaluation.

⁹ There is a certain lack of clarity in the use of the term "participatory evaluation" by a number of United Nations organizations that may refer to it with the intent of involving different entities: field staff or managers, counterpart officers, beneficiaries, other development partners or other stakeholders. It seems unlikely that many agencies are investing for the long duration and in the intensive use of resources required by classical participatory evaluation methods (for an example, see Fetterman, *Empowerment Evaluation: An Introduction to Theory and Practice*. Sage Publications, 1996).

¹⁰ The introduction of the UNDAF Results Matrix is a step in the direction indicated by the United Nations funds and programmes of the Executive Committee of UNDG, which decided to harmonize their results-based management terminology.

¹¹ See paragraph 25 above and footnote 6.

¹² When United Nations organizations do participate, they maintain the operational focus required by their specific mandates but may coordinate their evaluation and monitoring efforts so that they support the common review process. The annual review missions are sector or subsector specific, however, and they do not normally encompass the United Nations system or any subgroup of United Nations agencies in a specific country.

¹³ See United Nations, *Capacity-Building Supported by the United Nations — Some Evaluations and Some Lessons*, United Nations, New York, 1999 (United Nations publication, Sales No. 99.II.A.4) and United Nations, *Capacity-Building for Poverty Eradication-Analysis of, and Lessons from Evaluations of UN System Support to Countries' Efforts* (United Nations publication, Sales No. 02.II.A.10).

¹⁴ While headquarters evaluation staff are charged with providing technical support to the field offices, they are most often busy managing programme or thematic evaluations commissioned by their management and governing bodies.

¹⁵ As is the case, for example, with the United Nations Capital Development Fund.

¹⁶ The use of web-based methods of communication and dissemination of lessons learned from evaluation through intranets and extranets represents the single most common feature of recent efforts by United Nations organizations to improve the communication and dissemination of lessons learned from evaluation at all levels.

¹⁷ Just a sample would be: (a) UNDP in assisting countries to prepare national human development reports; (b) UNESCO in assisting countries in compiling national information and in reporting at a global level on progress towards the achievement of Education for All; (c) UNICEF in reporting on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the State of the World's Children; and (d) World Health Organization/Pan American Health Organization in assisting countries in compiling essential health data and reporting on progress on Health for All.



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Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters

Themes for the high-level and for the coordination segments of the substantive session of 2004 of the Economic and Social Council

Note by the Secretary-General

Summary

The present note aims to facilitate consultations among Member States on the themes for the high-level and for the coordination segments of the substantive session of 2004 of the Economic and Social Council. It contains proposals of Member States as well as of organs, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system on themes for both segments. Proposals of intergovernmental bodies and of the Secretary-General are also included in the note.

The Secretary-General suggests that the theme of the high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council in 2004 be: "Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010". A part of the coordination segment could accordingly be devoted to "Coordination issues of the United Nations system activities in least developed countries". It is suggested that the coordination segment adopt, as a second theme, "Review and appraisal of the system-wide implementation of the Council's agreed conclusions 1997/2 on mainstreaming the gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system".

* E/2003/100.



1. The present note is submitted to facilitate consultations among Member States on the themes for the high-level and for the coordination segments of the substantive session of 2004 of the Economic and Social Council.

I. Theme for the high-level segment

2. In paragraph 53 of annex I to its resolution 50/227, the General Assembly decided that, with regard to the theme for the high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council, the President of the Council, following consultations with Member States and, through the Secretary-General, with members of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, should present a proposal for a topical theme for the following year at the annual substantive session of the Council; and that, at the annual substantive session, the Council should undertake consultations on the theme for the high-level segment with a view to reaching a decision during the substantive session, if possible, but in any case not later than at a resumed session in the autumn following the annual session.

3. It should be recalled, at the outset, that the Economic and Social Council, in its decision 2001/320 decided to consider, at a substantive session before 2005, devoting a high-level segment to the review and coordination of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010 (A/CONF.191/11), and to consider later in the Decade further options for such review and coordination.

A. Proposals of Member States

4. The Secretary-General had consulted Member States through a note verbale dated 21 March 2003, as a result of which he received the following proposals for a theme:

- (a) Greece, on behalf of the European Union: "Least Developed Countries";
- (b) Azerbaijan: "Strengthening the capacities of the Economic and Social Council in relevant areas of crisis management: economic, social and environmental rehabilitation of affected countries";
- (c) Benin, on behalf of the Group of the Least Developed Countries: Resource mobilization for poverty eradication in the context of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010";
- (d) Congo: "Mobilization of resources for the eradication of poverty in the context of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010";
- (e) Croatia: "Integrated water resource management";
- (f) Japan: an issue relating to least developed countries;
- (g) South Africa: "In the context of the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic and social fields, a review of the progress towards the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals";

- (h) United States of America: "Agricultural trade and development";
- (i) Morocco:
 - (i) "Promotion and strengthening of regional cooperation among developing countries and its impact on development in the context of globalization";
 - (ii) "Viewing the debt problem as a key factor in policies to combat poverty";
 - (iii) "Coordination of efforts to bridge the digital divide in the development cooperation policies of the various agencies and partners of the United Nations system".

B. Proposals of bodies of the United Nations system

5. The United Nations Secretariat consulted the relevant bodies of the United Nations system and received the following proposals for a theme:

- (a) United Nations Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT):
 - (i) "Financing slum improvement for poverty eradication and economic development";
 - (ii) "Poverty eradication through sustainable urbanization, with particular focus on the least developed countries";
 - (iii) "Disaster management: opportunities and challenges in linking United Nations relief and development agencies in promoting development";
- (b) Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific:
 - (i) "Review and coordination of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010";
 - (ii) "Promoting sustainable development in the twenty-first century: translating commitments of the United Nations conferences and summits into action by promoting capacity-building and problem solving in the developing countries";
 - (iii) "Fostering public-private partnerships in developing countries for reducing poverty and promoting sustainable development";
 - (iv) "Information society and development: the role of information technology in economic and social development";
- (c) Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia:
 - (i) "An initiative for the development and reconstruction of conflict-stricken countries in the Middle East";
 - (ii) "Promoting peace-building through development in regions of instability and conflict";
 - (iii) "Trade facilitation in the light of the new world trading system";

- (iv) "Improving the quality of international trade statistics and increasing their coverage to secure accurate records of trade transactions under the new directions of liberalization of trade";
- (v) "The review and coordination of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010";
- (d) United Nations Conference on Trade and Development:
 - (i) "Strengthening the development dimensions of the evolving multilateral trading system";
 - (ii) "Globalization, migration and labour mobility";
 - (iii) "Enhancing global peace and security through economic development";
- (e) United Nations Environment Programme: "Sustainable production and consumption patterns";
- (f) Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees: "Transition from relief to development";
- (g) United Nations Population Fund: "Promoting consensus for sustainability in multilateral policies and operational activities for enhanced achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and towards rapid poverty eradication";
- (h) World Food Programme: "Review and coordination of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010";
- (i) Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS:
 - (i) "The impact of HIV/AIDS on women and girls — reaching the Millennium Development Goal on gender equality and women's empowerment; a prerequisite for a successful implementation of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS" adopted by the General Assembly at its special session in June 2001;
 - (ii) "Reversing the global spread of HIV/AIDS — integrating the Millennium Development Goals and the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS adopted by the General Assembly at its special session in June 2001";
- (j) Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations: "Review and coordination of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010";
- (k) International Monetary Fund: themes for the segments of the Economic and Social Council in 2004 should be closely related to the issues under review in the context of the Millennium Declaration and should be in line with the thematic approach considered in the ongoing deliberations on integrated follow-up to conferences;
- (l) International Maritime Organization: "Fostering a global approach for improved security in international transport as a component of equitable trade and sustainable development";

(m) International Fund for Agricultural Development: "Coordination of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010";

(n) International Atomic Energy Agency:

(i) "The role of technology-driven systems for sustainable development";

(ii) "The role of the United Nations in promoting technical advancement and growth in developing countries";

(o) Committee of Experts on Public Administration: "Revitalizing public administration".

C. Proposals of intergovernmental bodies

6. The Plan of Implementation of the World Summit for Sustainable Development (see A/CONF.199/20, chap. I) called upon the Economic and Social Council to organize periodic consideration of sustainable development themes in regard to the implementation of Agenda 21, including the means of implementation. Recommendations in regard to such themes could be made by the Commission on Sustainable Development. It also invited the Council to make full use of its high-level, coordination, operational activities and the general segments to effectively take into account all relevant aspects of the work of the United Nations on sustainable development.

D. Elements to be considered in selecting the theme

7. In selecting the theme for its high-level segment, the Economic and Social Council may wish to take into account the following considerations:

(a) The Council may wish to choose a major economic and/or social policy theme of topical interest;

(b) The theme should allow for an integrated and interdisciplinary approach;

(c) The theme should enable the Council to receive the maximum benefit from ministerial participation and from the presence of heads of agencies, funds, programmes and other bodies of the United Nations system, including the international trade and financial institutions;

(d) The deliberations of the high-level segment should provide political impetus for building areas of convergence and facilitate the consideration of the issues in question, including the emergence of new recommendations on the issues in the relevant forums (see General Assembly resolution 45/264, annex, para. 5 (d) (i));

(e) It may be recalled that the Agenda for Development (General Assembly resolution 51/240, annex) specified that the Council, at its high-level segment, should consider major issues for international cooperation in the economic, social and related fields. The high-level segment should be used for improving the synergy between the economic and social sectors of the United Nations system. In so doing, the Council should also contribute towards enhancing the interaction between the

United Nations, the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization (para. 252 (a));

(f) It may also be recalled that, in the event that a matter of high urgency and priority subsequently emerges that would qualify as a theme for the high-level segment, the Council may, as appropriate, consider that theme as an additional topic for discussion at its high-level segment (see General Assembly resolution 50/227, annex I, para. 53).

8. In paragraph 7 of Economic and Social Council resolution 2001/27, the Secretary-General was requested to submit to the Council, when it considered the themes for its high-level and coordination segments, information about the multi-year work programmes of the functional commissions. The requested information is contained in the consolidated report of the Secretary-General on the work of the functional commissions in 2003 which will be before the Council.

9. Box 1 highlights the themes examined by the Council at its high-level segments in previous years.

Box 1

Themes examined by the Economic and Social Council at its high-level segments since 1995

- 1995 Development of Africa, including the implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s.
- 1996 International cooperation against the illicit production, sale, demand, traffic and distribution of narcotics and psychotropic substances and related activities.
- 1997 Fostering an enabling environment for development: financial flows, including capital flows, investment and trade.
- 1998 Market access: developments since the Uruguay Round: implications, opportunity and challenges, in particular for the developing countries and the least developed among them, in the context of globalization and liberalization.
- 1999 The role of employment and work in poverty eradication: the empowerment and advancement of women.
- 2000 Development and international cooperation in the twenty-first century: the role of information technology in the context of a knowledge-based global economy.
- 2001 The role of the United Nations system in supporting the efforts of African countries to achieve sustainable development.
- 2002 The contribution of human resources development, including in the areas of health and education, to the process of development.
- 2003 Promoting an integrated approach to rural development in developing countries for poverty eradication and sustainable development.

II. Possible themes for the coordination segment

10. In its agreed conclusions 1995/1,¹ the Economic and Social Council invited the Secretary-General, taking into account the suggestions made in his 1995 report on coordinated follow-up to major international conferences in the economic, social and related fields (see E/1995/86, para. 57) and based on the work of relevant subsidiary bodies and through consultations with Member States, relevant organs of the United Nations system and specialized agencies, to offer suggestions for possible common themes for follow-up of major international conferences for consideration and decision by the Council. The Council decided that, in that segment, it should carry out a review of cross-cutting themes common to major international conferences and/or contribute to an overall review of the implementation of the programme of action of a United Nations conference. The Council also decided that the theme for the follow-up to conferences would be chosen at the Council's previous substantive session to allow for adequate preparations.

11. The agreed conclusions on strengthening further the Economic and Social Council, building on its recent achievements, to help it to fulfil the role ascribed to it in the Charter of the United Nations as contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration (see A/57/3, agreed conclusions 2002/1), suggest that the Council shall continue to carry out, each year, at its coordination segment, a review of cross-cutting themes common to major international conferences and summits. The theme could be related to the theme of the high-level segment, respecting decisions already made by the Council, thus enabling the Council to address both the policy and system-wide coordination aspects of the theme. In making decisions for the related themes for the coordination segment of the following year, the Council should seek to identify themes, including on new and evolving issues, which will add value to international efforts to achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration and the outcomes of all other major United Nations conferences and summits.

12. The Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 2001/41, decided to devote the coordination segment of one of its substantive sessions, before 2005, to the review and appraisal of the system-wide implementation of its agreed conclusions 1997/2² on mainstreaming the gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system.

A. Proposals of Member States

13. The Secretary-General had consulted Member States through a note verbale dated 21 March 2003, as a result of which he received the following written proposals for a theme:

- (a) Greece, on behalf of the European Union: "Gender mainstreaming";
- (b) Azerbaijan: "The role of the Economic and Social Council in enhancing effective employment of official development assistance for sustainable development";
- (c) Canada: "Review and appraisal of the system-wide implementation of the Economic and Social Council agreed conclusions 1997/2 on mainstreaming the

gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system in accordance with Council resolution 2001/41”;

(d) Congo: “Promotion of gender equality with a view to achieving development goals and those contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration”;

(e) Japan: “A review and appraisal of the system-wide implementation of the Economic and Social Council agreed conclusions 1997/2 on mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes of the United Nations system”;

(f) Morocco: “Coordination and harmonization of financial and monetary policies in the context of the follow-up to and implementation of the Monterrey Consensus”.

B. Proposals by organs, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system

14. The United Nations Secretariat had consulted the organs, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system through a letter dated 17 March 2003, as a result of which the Secretary-General received the following proposals for a theme:

- (a) United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT):
 - (i) “The role of the United Nations in promoting adequate access to drinking water and sanitation, particularly for women and children living in poverty”;
 - (ii) “The role of the Economic and Social Council in achieving the Millennium Development Goals”;
- (b) Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific:
 - (i) “Coordinated follow-up by the United Nations system and implementation of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS”;
 - (ii) “The role of the Economic and Social Council in coordinating and complementing national efforts in monitoring the pursuit of the Millennium Development Goals”;
 - (iii) “Strengthening the role of the Economic and Social Council to complement and support national efforts in the implementation of the outcomes of and follow-up to the United Nations conferences and summits on economic, social and sustainable development”;
- (c) Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia:
 - (i) “Rights-based approach to development, peace and equality within the framework of the Millennium Development Goals and gender mainstreaming”;
 - (ii) “Intensify efforts for coordinating data collection disaggregated by sex (or broken down by gender) in the context of development and Millennium Development Goals indicators”;

- (iii) "Role of the United Nations in building the information society in developing countries, with emphasis on short- and medium-term action plans and creating partnerships among stakeholders";
- (iv) "Coordinated follow-up on implementation of World Trade Organization-related agreements";
- (v) "Strengthening and building the capacity of States members of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia in terms of developing alternative sources to supplement custom-based trade data and promoting development of electronic commerce infrastructure/supporting service by enhancing information and communication technologies (ICTs) policies at the national and regional levels";
- (d) United Nations Population Fund: "Role of the Economic and Social Council in promoting a cross-cutting agenda, integrating and coordinating the goals of all major United Nations conferences and summits, to enhance sustainability for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and rapid poverty eradication";
- (e) World Food Programme: "Review and appraisal of the system-wide implementation of Economic and Social Council agreed conclusions 1997/2 on mainstreaming the gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system".
- (f) Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS:
 - (i) "The impact of HIV/AIDS on women and girls — reaching the Millennium Development Goal on gender equality and women's empowerment; a prerequisite for a successful implementation of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS" of the special session of the General Assembly on HIV/AIDS;
 - (ii) "Reversing the global spread of HIV/AIDS — integrating the Millennium Development Goals and the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS adopted by the General Assembly at its special session on HIV/AIDS in June 2001";
- (g) Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations: "Review and appraisal of the system-wide implementation of Economic and Social Council agreed conclusions 1997/2 on mainstreaming the gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system";
- (h) International Maritime Organization: "Assessment of the progress made within the United Nations system on mainstreaming the gender perspective into all policies and programmes and the consequential effect on the advancement of economic and social equality in developing countries";
- (i) International Fund for Agricultural Development: "Indigenous peoples";
- (j) International Atomic Energy Agency: "Holistic approaches for water, health and food for sustainable development".

C. Proposals of intergovernmental bodies

15. The Johannesburg Plan of Implementation called upon the Economic and Social Council to organize periodic consideration of sustainable development themes in regard to the implementation of Agenda 21, including the means of implementation.

16. The Commission on the Status of Women, at its forty-seventh session, requested the Economic and Social Council to consider deciding to devote its coordination segment in 2004 to a review and appraisal of the system-wide implementation of its agreed conclusions 1997/2 on mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes of the United Nations system (see E/CN.6/2003/L.3/Rev.1).

D. Elements to be considered in selecting the theme

17. In selecting a theme for its coordination segment, the Economic and Social Council may wish to take the following factors into account:

(a) The theme should be a major cross-cutting outcome of several international conferences in the economic, social or related fields;

(b) The theme should be a subject of operational relevance to a number of organizations of the system and/or a subject in respect of which several functional commissions have been active;

(c) The theme should have a significant policy dimension so as to maximize the benefit that could be derived from the presence of heads of agencies, funds, programmes and other bodies of the United Nations system during the discussions;

(d) The discussion of the theme by the Council and the agreed conclusions on the theme should contribute to enhanced coordination of policies and activities by the United Nations system;

(e) The theme could be related to the theme of the high-level segment, respecting decisions already made by the Council, thus enabling the Council to address both the policy and system-wide coordination aspects of the theme;

(f) The theme, including on new and evolving issues, should add value to international efforts to achieving the internationally agreed development goals.

18. The Economic and Social Council, in choosing its theme, may also wish to take into consideration information about the functional commissions' multi-year work programmes (see para. 8 above), as contained in the consolidated report of the Secretary-General on the work of the functional commissions in 2003.

19. Themes examined by the Economic and Social Council at its coordination segment in previous years are listed in box 2.

Box 2**Themes considered by the Economic and Social Council at its coordination segments**

- 1995 Coordinated follow-up by the United Nations system and implementation of the results of major international conferences organized by the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields.
- 1996 Coordination of the United Nations system activities for poverty eradication (three sub-themes).
- 1997 Mainstreaming the gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system.
Freshwater, including clean and safe water supply and sanitation.
- 1998 Coordinated follow-up to and implementation of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action.
- 1999 Development of Africa: implementation and coordinated follow-up by the United Nations system of initiatives on African development.
- 2000 Assessment of the progress made within the United Nations system, through the conference reviews, in the promotion of an integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields.
Coordinated implementation by the United Nations system of the Habitat Agenda.
- 2001 The role of the United Nations in promoting development, particularly with respect to access to and transfer of knowledge and technology, especially information and communication technologies, inter alia, through partnerships with relevant stakeholders, including the private sector.
- 2002 Strengthening further the Economic and Social Council, building on its recent achievements, to help it fulfil the role ascribed to it in the Charter of the United Nations as contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration.
- 2003 The role of the Economic and Social Council in the integrated and coordinated implementation of the outcomes of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits.

20. It should also be underscored that the General Assembly, in its resolutions 45/264 and 48/162, provided for the Council's coordination segment to deal with one or more themes. Paragraph 57 of annex I to General Assembly resolution 50/227 provided that the Council should give consideration to choosing a second theme dealing with concrete sectoral issues. Thus, in addition to the theme for follow-up to conferences, the Council may also choose a sectoral theme, should it decide to do so, at its substantive session.

III. Proposals by the Secretary-General

21. In the Millennium Declaration, heads of State undertook to address the special needs of the least developed countries. The Programme of Action adopted by the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries provided a framework for a global partnership to advance sustained economic growth and sustainable development in these countries. The intergovernmental review of the Programme of Action is important to ensure that there is sustained implementation. The Council has an important role in the follow-up to the Conference: the Brussels Programme of Action invited it to devote an annual agenda item to the review and coordination of the implementation of the Programme of Action, and to examine at regular intervals this review and coordination at its high-level segment. The Council can notably help to mobilize all partners in implementing commitments made and to foster international cooperation in this regard. It can galvanize the efforts of the United Nations system, including international financial institutions and other multilateral organizations, to mainstream the implementation of the programme of action in their respective programme of work and intergovernmental processes.

22. In the light of the above, it is suggested that the theme of the high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council in 2004 be: "Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010". This would also be consistent with decision 2001/320 of the Council to consider, at a substantive session before 2005, devoting a high-level segment to the review and coordination of the implementation of the Programme of Action.

23. The Council could consider devoting a session of its one-day policy dialogue with heads of international financial and trade institutions to reviewing finance and trade issues affecting the situation of least developed countries.

24. The Economic and Social Council decided in its agreed conclusions 2002/1 that the theme of its coordination segment could be related to the theme of the high-level segment respecting decisions already made by the Council, thus enabling the Council to address both the policy and system-wide coordination aspects of the theme. Furthermore, the report of the Secretary-General for the coordination segment suggests that the Council introduce greater thematic unity in its sessions. A part of the coordination segment could accordingly be devoted to "Coordination issues of the United Nations system activities in least developed countries". The operational activities segment could address, among others, "Funding of operational activities in the least developed countries". Likewise, the humanitarian affairs segment could address challenges linked to the United Nations system's work in least developed countries.

25. In addition, it is suggested that at the coordination segment the Council adopt, as a second theme, "Review and appraisal of the system-wide implementation of the Council's agreed conclusions 1997/2 on mainstreaming the gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system". The Economic and Social Council agreed to devote, before 2005, a coordination segment to a review and appraisal of the implementation of its agreed conclusions 1997/2. This would be the occasion for the Council to review progress in implementing the broad-ranging recommendations it addressed then to organizations and bodies of the United Nations to mainstream a gender perspective into their work. Such a discussion

would enable the Council to address gender equality, a theme that ran through all conferences. The Commission on the Status of Women should be invited to prepare this discussion of the Council at its 2004 session. All other functional commissions, intergovernmental bodies and organizations of the United Nations system would be invited to report back to the Council on their own progress in mainstreaming the gender perspective. An appropriate number of days should be allocated to the coordination segment to enable it to devote adequate attention to the two themes proposed.

26. In the Council's coordination segment and in the ad hoc open-ended Working Group of the General Assembly on the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic and social fields, the question whether the Economic and Social Council should adopt a multi-year programme of work for the themes of its segments has been discussed. The Council may wish to bear this in mind as it decides on its themes for 2004.

Notes

¹ See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fiftieth Session, Supplement No. 3* (A/50/3/Rev.1), chap. III, para. 22.

² *Ibid.*, *Fifty-second Session, Supplement No. 3* (A/52/3/Rev.1), chap. IV, para. 4.



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Coordination, programme and other questions

Joint United Nations Programme on Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (UNAIDS)

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the Economic and Social Council the report of the Executive Director of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS or "the Programme"), prepared pursuant to Council resolution 2001/23.

Summary

The present report was prepared in response to Council resolution 2001/23, in which the Secretary-General was requested to transmit to the Council at its substantive session of 2003 a report prepared by the Executive Director of the Programme, in collaboration with other relevant organizations and bodies of the United Nations system, which should include the progress made in developing a coordinated response by the United Nations system to the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

The report provides an update of the status of the epidemic; summarizes steps taken by UNAIDS to promote the implementation of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS adopted by the special session of the United Nations General Assembly on HIV/AIDS in June 2001; summarizes other key developments in advancing a more effective and coordinated United Nations system response to the epidemic; and provides an overview of the future directions of UNAIDS in response to decisions made by its Programme Coordinating Board at its 13th meeting in December 2002 following an external evaluation of the Programme.

The report concludes with a series of recommendations. The Economic and Social Council is invited to review the report and endorse its recommendations.

* E/2003/100.



**Report by the Executive Director of the Joint United Nations
Programme on Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired
Immunodeficiency Syndrome (UNAIDS)**

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I. Status of the epidemic

1. Since the first clinical evidence of acquired immunodeficiency syndrome was reported some 20 years ago, it has become clear that AIDS represents the most devastating epidemic in human history. Over the past decades, more than 60 million people have been infected with the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). AIDS is now by far the leading cause of death in sub-Saharan Africa and the fourth biggest killer worldwide. HIV/AIDS poses a potentially major threat to food security and nutrition, as can now be seen in southern Africa.

2. At the end of 2002, about 42 million people globally were living with HIV, 38.6 million of them adults and 3.2 million children under the age of 15. An estimated 5 million people became infected with the virus in 2002 and 3.1 million people were killed by AIDS in 2002.

3. In sub-Saharan Africa, the epidemic continues to expand. An estimated 3.5 million new infections occurred in 2002 and 2.4 million Africans died of the disease. It is estimated that 28.1 million people now live with the virus in sub-Saharan Africa. In seven countries in sub-Saharan Africa more than 20 per cent of adults are HIV-positive and in several areas in southern Africa prevalence rates among pregnant women exceed 30 per cent. There are, though, signs of progress in some countries, for example in the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia, where the prevalence rates among young people are falling, in South Africa, where the number of pregnant women under the age of 20 who are HIV-positive fell to 15.4 per cent in 2001, compared to 21 per cent in 1998, and in Uganda, where the prevalence rates among adults continue to fall.

4. In Asia and the Pacific, 7.2 million people are now living with HIV. The national HIV prevalence levels are low, with the exception of Cambodia, Myanmar and Thailand. In large countries such as China, India and Indonesia the low prevalence rates conceal the picture with respect to the epidemic. In China, the official estimates put the number of people living with HIV at 1 million in 2002. In India, the national adult HIV prevalence is estimated to be less than 1 per cent. An estimated 3.97 million people were living there with HIV at the end of 2001. Some countries in the region have managed to keep the infection rates lower in populations at risk through large-scale prevention programmes. In Cambodia for example, the HIV prevalence reported among pregnant women had declined from 3.2 per cent in 1997 to 2.3 per cent at the end of 2000.

5. In North Africa and the Middle East, systematic surveillance of HIV remains inadequate, confounding efforts to deduce accurate trends. Sexual contact remains the dominant mode of transmission, but outbreaks of HIV among injecting drug users have occurred. Increases in HIV have been notable in the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya and the Islamic Republic of Iran.

6. Eastern Europe and Central Asia continue to have the world's fastest-growing HIV/AIDS epidemic. Up to 90 per cent of registered infections there have been attributed to injecting drug use. Most infections occurred among young people under 29 years of age.

7. In Latin America and the Caribbean an estimated 1.6 million people are living with the virus. The Caribbean is the second most affected region in the world. The average adult HIV prevalence is approximately 2 per cent. Haiti remains the worst

affected with an estimated national prevalence among adults of over 6 per cent. the Bahamas have a prevalence of 3.5 per cent.

8. In high-income countries, the introduction of antiretroviral therapy has dramatically reduced HIV/AIDS related mortality, although this trend has begun to level off in the past two years. The latest data available show that the epidemic is progressively shifting into poorer and marginalized sectors of the community.

9. Current projections suggest that an additional 45 million people will become infected with HIV in 126 low- and middle-income countries between 2002 and 2010. More than 40 per cent of those infections are expected to occur in Asia and the Pacific. With the implementation of a full prevention package by 2005, however, the number of new infections could be reduced by 29 million by 2010.

II. Overall context

10. Major developments since the submission of the Programme's previous report to the Economic and Social Council include follow-up actions taken by UNAIDS, the broader United Nations system, Member States and a wide range of other partners in response to the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS endorsed by the General Assembly at its twenty-sixth special session in June 2001; the completion of an external five-year evaluation of UNAIDS; and the decisions taken by the Programme Coordinating Board at its 13th meeting in December 2002, in which the future directions of UNAIDS were set out.

A. Promotion and implementation of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS

11. The Declaration of Commitment provides a set of clear global priorities for the response to HIV/AIDS. The Declaration calls for global and national action in 10 key areas: leadership; prevention; care, support and treatment; HIV/AIDS and human rights; reducing vulnerability; children orphaned and made vulnerable by HIV/AIDS; alleviating social and economic impact; research and development; HIV/AIDS in conflict and disaster-affected regions; and resources. Governments are expected to formulate and implement policies and action in each of these areas, while global and regional initiatives are expected to reinforce and complement national action. The adoption of the Declaration of Commitment reinforces the goal in the Millennium Declaration to halt and begin to reverse the spread of AIDS by 2015.

12. Since the special session of the General Assembly on HIV/AIDS, the Declaration of Commitment has been considered by the governing boards of all the co-sponsoring organizations and each board has urged that specific action should be taken to ensure full implementation of the Declaration. As a group, the UNAIDS co-sponsoring organizations (the co-sponsors) and the secretariat have agreed to a series of actions in four key areas: (i) advocacy; (ii) normative guidance and operations support; (iii) communications and public information; and (iv) civil society engagement. The UNAIDS Committee of Cosponsoring Organizations is monitoring progress in each of the areas on a regular basis.

13. An Action Guide was prepared to assist United Nations country teams in supporting national efforts to implement the Declaration. The Guide proposes a minimum set of activities to be supported in all countries (for example, translation and dissemination of the Declaration and a multisectoral review and updating of national strategic plans on HIV/AIDS), as well as examples of supportive actions for consideration in specific settings (for example, expansion of theme groups on HIV/AIDS and dialogue with interest groups).

14. In addition, a monitoring and evaluation framework was developed and approved by the UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board, in May 2002. Guidelines on the construction of core indicators to measure progress in achieving the goals of the Declaration were then developed and disseminated worldwide, together with the monitoring and evaluation framework. The indicators are consistent with those identified for the United Nations Millennium Development Goals.

15. The first report of the Secretary-General on implementation of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS (A/57/227) was submitted to the General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session, in October 2002. The report provided a global summary of the first country reports relating to the Declaration and, in so doing, provided a baseline against which future progress could be measured.

16. The report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session will provide an update on progress made in the past 12 months. Member States were asked by the Secretary-General to report back on a set of 13 core indicators and on activities in key areas covered by the Declaration. The information they provide, as well as data from a wide range of other sources, will be used to monitor progress towards reaching the goals set out in the Declaration for 2003.

B. External evaluation of UNAIDS

17. The external evaluation of the first five years of UNAIDS was conducted between July 2001 and August 2002. The final evaluation report, submitted to the Chair of the Programme Coordinating Board in October 2002, contained 29 specific recommendations covering issues including strategic vision, governance and management, and five key functions for UNAIDS at the global and country levels. The evaluation recognized several successes achieved by the Programme, particularly at the global level, and suggested that greater efforts were needed in support of national responses. The recommendations that resulted from the evaluation were considered by the Board at a special thematic meeting in December 2002.

C. Future directions of the Joint Programme

18. At its 13th meeting, in December 2002, the Programme Coordinating Board considered a report of the UNAIDS Executive Director, entitled: "Future directions for UNAIDS: responding to the five-year evaluation of the Programme". The report was the result of extensive consultations with the UNAIDS co-sponsors, the broader United Nations system, and other national and international partners, based on the initial recommendations of the external evaluation. The report of the Secretary-General on the next phase of United Nations system reform provided a valuable context for the development of future directions for UNAIDS. Based on the external

review, the Executive Director, in his report, proposed five core functions for UNAIDS, applicable at all levels of the Programme, namely: (i) leadership and advocacy for effective action on the epidemic; (ii) strategic information required to guide the efforts of partners; (iii) tracking, monitoring and evaluation of the epidemic and actions responding to it; (iv) civil society engagement and partnership development; and (v) financial, technical and political resource mobilization.

19. The Programme Coordinating Board endorsed these five cross-cutting functions, as well as a set of actions to guide the future direction of UNAIDS. The Board also created an open-ended working group on the governance of UNAIDS and requested that a report be submitted on this issue at its 14th meeting in June 2003.

III. Progress in the UNAIDS partnership

20. This section reviews the progress made by UNAIDS, including both the secretariat and co-sponsors, as well as other United Nations agencies, in supporting expanded responses to HIV/AIDS at all levels. It describes this progress in terms of the five key functions of UNAIDS endorsed by the Programme Coordinating Board in December 2002.

A. Advocacy and leadership for effective action

21. The Declaration of Commitment recognizes that "strong leadership at all levels of society is essential for an effective response to the epidemic". The leadership provisions include: the reinforcement of national capacity; support for regional leadership; and strengthening and accelerating global advocacy and leadership initiatives.

1. Strengthening national capacity and leadership

22. One of the most critical factors in mounting and sustaining an effective national response is national leadership. The Programme has, through the United Nations theme groups on HIV/AIDS, advocated and supported the creation of and provided support to national AIDS councils to strengthen national leadership and coordination. Awareness of the multifaceted determinants of the epidemic and the increasing evidence of its impact across sectors have, in most countries, led to considerable support for multisectoral approaches and broad partnerships.

23. During the past two years, United Nations theme groups on HIV/AIDS have assisted countries develop multisectoral plans and integrate HIV/AIDS strategies into mainstream development planning instruments, such as the United Nations Development Assistance Framework, poverty-reduction strategies and medium-term expenditure frameworks, as well as bilateral development assistance. In doing so, they have strengthened national commitment and capacity to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. By the end of 2002, 102 countries had developed national strategic plans for HIV/AIDS. A strong national plan provides an effective coordination platform for the engagement of a wide range of partners. The most important challenge for UNAIDS over the next few years will be to assist countries in transforming strategic plans into large-scale programmes. The actions required to

support the scaling-up of country responses have implications for the capacities of United Nations country teams, particularly in the most affected countries.

2. Support to regional leadership

24. UNAIDS has provided considerable support to regional initiatives and partnerships that focus on strengthening leadership and advocacy efforts. Examples of this support in different regions are outlined below.

25. The Programme of Urgent Response of the Commonwealth of Independent States to the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Eastern Europe and Central Asia is an initiative that seeks to advance the goals and targets of the Declaration of Commitment through broad-based national action, with technical, financial and policy support from UNAIDS, including collaboration with the World Bank, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

26. The Pan Caribbean Partnership against HIV/AIDS, launched in 2001, now comprises some 63 institutions, including United Nations agencies, regional non-governmental organizations, multilateral and bilateral donors, private sector enterprises and the Governments of the Caribbean region. Joint advocacy and action, led by the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), and supported by UNAIDS, has assisted national and regional planning for expanded access to care and treatment, as well as to successful negotiation of reduced antiretroviral prices.

27. The Asia Pacific Leadership Forum on HIV/AIDS and Development was launched in August 2002 at the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) Ministerial Meeting in Brunei Darussalam. The challenge for the Forum is to galvanize leadership throughout Asia and the Pacific, as well as to promote the use of evidence-based advocacy tools, facilitate information exchange and support the full engagement of civil society, particularly at the country level.

28. Leadership against AIDS in Africa was highlighted at the special Summit of the Heads of State and Government of Organization of African Unity on HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and related infections, held in Abuja in April 2001, which inter alia established the "AIDS Watch Africa" group of African heads of State. With support from UNAIDS, the African Centre for HIV/AIDS Management was established under the oversight of AIDS Watch Africa to provide policy analysis and disseminate information. During 2002, UNAIDS placed particular priority on mainstreaming HIV/AIDS into the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), including through close contact with the NEPAD secretariat and supporting its technical work. In addition, UNICEF has led high-visibility consultations with senior leaders in Africa to put the issue of orphans more prominently on the leadership agenda at regional level.

29. UNAIDS is supporting increased engagement by the education sector in the response to AIDS, in particular in Africa. The UNAIDS Inter-Agency Task Team on Education, convened by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), has developed a strategy which includes training for senior-level education policy makers. Similar strategies for engaging the education sector are planned for South-East Asia and Eastern Europe.

3. Global leadership initiatives

30. Leadership of the global response to AIDS continues to be a top priority of UNAIDS. This includes, among other actions: enhancing awareness and understanding of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS; pursuing sound communications and public information strategies; and consolidating political dialogue through evidence-based material. The Declaration of Commitment has been featured as an important agenda item at most global and regional conferences since its adoption by the General Assembly at its special session on HIV/AIDS in June 2001.

31. The United Nations General Assembly special session on children, held in May 2002, paid considerable attention to the impact of AIDS on children. The outcome document, "A world fit for children" includes HIV/AIDS as a priority area for action. Building on the Millennium Development Goals, it endorsed the goals and targets of the Declaration of Commitment, as they relate to children orphaned by or made vulnerable to the AIDS epidemic.

32. The United Nations Secretary-General has continued to spearhead international attention to AIDS, including the impact of the epidemic on women and the leadership of African women in the response, the need for broad partnerships in responding to AIDS, and the issue of AIDS, food insecurity and diminished institutional capacity. In his many country visits the Secretary-General has raised AIDS awareness, both publicly and in his direct contacts with leaders at all levels. The advocacy efforts of the Secretary-General also fostered the establishment in 2002 of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. Within the United Nations system he has advocated the inclusion of HIV/AIDS on the agenda of the biennial meetings of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination.

33. The global advocacy efforts of UNAIDS have included the World AIDS Campaign, which focused on stigma and discrimination in 2001-2002. World AIDS Day (1 December) has continued to generate advocacy opportunities in tens of thousands of communities, supported by global messages and media outreach.

34. A key initiative at the biennial International AIDS Conference held in Barcelona, Spain, in July 2002 was a series of leadership activities convened by the UNAIDS secretariat and the International AIDS Trust, including events with parliamentarians, prominent women leaders and a group of current and former heads of State.

B. Strategic information required to guide efforts

35. During the past two years, UNAIDS has continued to provide strategic information to assist policy formulation, prioritize investments and implement programmes at country, regional and global levels. Examples of the types of strategic information disseminated by the UNAIDS secretariat and co-sponsors during the reporting period are given below.

1. Country level

36. In 2002-2003, UNAIDS has continued to produce and analyse new information on the epidemic, tracking costs and available resources, and identifying in-country actors contributing to the response.

37. The Country Response Information System (CRIS) is designed to help meet the need for improved and accessible information and analysis, including that related to monitoring the indicators of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS. By April 2003, the system was installed in more than 40 countries in Africa, Asia and Eastern Europe, and it is planned that it will be operational in all countries by the end of 2005. The UNAIDS secretariat and co-sponsors have made progress in harmonizing CRIS with other information systems to streamline monitoring and evaluation efforts at the country level.

38. UNAIDS is also assisting countries to: estimate the impact of the epidemic; disseminate best practice and lessons learned through programmatic successes such as those in Uganda, Thailand and Cambodia; and engage civil society and the private sector more extensively in the response.

2. Regional

39. The World Bank, the UNAIDS secretariat and the Futures Group have assisted the Commonwealth of Independent States to assess resource requirements for HIV/AIDS in 30 countries in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. This work has helped countries in the region to formulate and cost proposals and has led to increased funding for HIV/AIDS activities.

40. In response to an analysis that argued against providing treatment in Africa, the UNAIDS secretariat, the World Bank and WHO issued a joint statement to demonstrate: the interplay between care and prevention; the benefits of increasing the quality of life and prolonging life itself; the contribution that investment in care makes to the success of prevention efforts; and the relationship of improved treatment access to mitigating the immediate and future economic and social costs of HIV/AIDS. This statement was widely circulated in the media and was published in the scientific literature and evidence suggests it assisted more rational deployment of funds to both care and prevention interventions.

41. In the Latin American and Caribbean region, a model that allows policy makers to determine the resource allocation that will prevent a maximum number of new HIV infections at any given budget level has been developed by the World Bank and applied in Honduras, Guatemala and Panama. In addition in Latin America and the Caribbean, 20 countries have effected a detailed analysis of AIDS resource flows under the guidance of SIDALAC¹ and with support from the World Bank, the UNAIDS secretariat and the Inter-American Development Bank. This information has allowed an assessment of resource gaps and has guided better targeted resource mobilization.

¹ SIDALAC is a regional initiative on HIV/AIDS for Latin America and the Caribbean, within the Mexican Health Foundation (FUNSALUD).

3. Global

42. During the reporting period, 45 new best practice documents were produced in the following thematic areas: access to care, treatment and support; human rights, including stigma and discrimination; HIV/AIDS in the workplace; prevention; strategic planning; private sector/business response; people living with HIV/AIDS; voluntary counselling and testing; vulnerable groups and young people.

43. UNICEF, together with USAID and the UNAIDS secretariat, produced "Children on the brink 2002". This document is a comprehensive resource for statistics, trends and challenges on orphans and vulnerable children. UNICEF, the UNAIDS secretariat and WHO also collaborated in producing a document, "Young people and HIV/AIDS: opportunities in crises", which provides benchmarks for countries against which the application of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS for young people and orphans and vulnerable children can be measured.

44. UNFPA developed and disseminated several guidelines and tools to facilitate male and female condom programming. UNFPA and the UNAIDS secretariat conducted analyses on the interaction between condom promotion and other prevention initiatives, such as the provision of information and health services. This work provides useful perspectives to help direct investments in this field.

45. In the area of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), WHO has led the development of a number of important products, including "A global strategy for the prevention and care of STIs" (expected to be completed towards the end of 2003). WHO has also developed and published a set of four guidelines for the clinical management of pregnant women with HIV. UNFPA is developing a training/programming manual focused on HIV prevention for pregnant women and mothers.

46. UNAIDS continues to promote comprehensive prevention approaches, including knowledge and skills development, access to health services and creating a safe and supportive environment. The UNAIDS secretariat and co-sponsors have produced a number of guidelines in these areas based on successes at the country level in different regions.

47. With regard to expanding access to care and treatment, WHO, with UNICEF and the UNAIDS secretariat, has developed and disseminated strategic information in a number of key areas to support countries in the rational selection and use of HIV medicines. WHO, UNICEF, the UNAIDS secretariat and Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) continue to maintain and provide updated information on prices and sources of HIV medicines in the public domain. This initiative is being expanded to include information on drug registration in countries.

48. UNAIDS supports the International HIV/AIDS Economics Network and works with the UNAIDS Reference Group on Economics to coordinate and advance economic analyses in this field. In addition, various units in the World Bank, including the Global HIV/AIDS Program and the Human Development Network, established the HIV/AIDS Economic Working Group in November 2002 to coordinate and share analytical work on the economics of HIV/AIDS, including a major assessment of the macroeconomic impact of the epidemic.

49. Promotion and dissemination of a broad range of best practice documentation will, as recommended by the Programme Coordinating Board, increasingly be

ensured through a more coherent multi-agency and multi-partner effort. Emphasis will be placed on promoting best practice documentation that is: more comprehensive; relevant to partners involved in HIV/AIDS programming at the country level; operationally oriented, drawn from particular regional and country situations; evaluative, reflecting greater attention to comparative studies and reviews; and accessible, through a wider array of distribution channels and partners and links to national partnership forums. At the global level, systematic efforts will be made to identify and respond to gaps in key policy and programme areas, in consultation with appropriate partners.

C. Civil society engagement and partnership development

50. During the reporting period, UNAIDS intensified its support to a wide range of partners, particularly at the country level. It reached out to many different government sectors, to civil society and to the private sector. Particular attention has been paid to ensuring the participation of people living with HIV/AIDS, including through the strengthening of networks of people living with HIV/AIDS in many regions of the world.

1. Strengthened capacity of co-sponsors

51. The UNAIDS co-sponsors have significantly reinforced the importance of HIV/AIDS within their work programmes. Most co-sponsoring organizations now include HIV/AIDS as a corporate priority in its own right, with dedicated staff, strategies, targets and indicators integrated into medium-term strategic plans. The International Labour Organization (ILO) joined UNAIDS in October 2001 as the eighth co-sponsor and has developed a special ILO programme on HIV/AIDS and the world of work. Efforts are under way to improve the links between the UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board and the governing boards of the co-sponsors, in line with the decision taken by the Board in December 2002 and the recommendations of the open-ended working group on governance, deliberations on which are expected at the meeting of the Board in June 2003.

52. The unified budget and workplan has also continued to play a key role in reinforcing the UNAIDS partnership. Important achievements in 2002-2003 at the global, regional and country levels included, for example, strengthened commitment and capacity of co-sponsors; increased global awareness of HIV/AIDS; and the establishment of normative frameworks in a number of important areas, including education, access to treatment in resource limited settings, orphans and vulnerable children, and the AIDS response in the world of work. The thrust of the 2004-2005 unified budget and workplan is on consolidating these achievements and implementing the decisions of the Programme Coordinating Board following the external evaluation of UNAIDS. In line with those decisions, significantly increased efforts and resources are devoted in the unified budget and workplan to scaling up the response to HIV/AIDS at the country level.

53. At the country level, the United Nations theme groups on HIV/AIDS are now operational in 134 countries. Eighty per cent have expanded membership, beyond the UNAIDS co-sponsoring organizations, comprising key national partners including representatives of Governments, people living with HIV/AIDS, non-governmental organizations, other United Nations system agencies, bilateral

agencies and other donors. Expanded theme groups are intended to establish national coordination mechanisms, not to duplicate or compete with national leadership. In addition, UNAIDS country programme advisers are placed in about 60 countries, to ensure coordination and provide leadership and support for the work of the theme groups. At its 13th meeting in December 2002, the Programme Coordinating Board decided that the country programme advisers would henceforth be called UNAIDS country coordinators, reflecting more accurately their role as facilitators of all aspects of national response, both within and beyond the United Nations system.

54. The Programme Coordinating Board recommended that comprehensive joint programmes to support national responses be developed, replacing the United Nations integrated workplans that have existed to date. These new programmes should include: (i) the combined budgets and workplans for joint and individual agency efforts in support of the national response to AIDS; (ii) clear objectives and indicators to monitor their achievements; (iii) a listing of individual agencies' efforts reflecting their specific roles and responsibilities, as well as the five key functions of UNAIDS; and (iv) the coordinating activities of the United Nations theme groups on HIV/AIDS.

55. The UNAIDS Committee of Co-sponsoring Organizations adopted in October 2001 the concept of "convening agency" for specific thematic areas within the expanded response. It also clarified the use of inter-agency task teams on specific issues: care and support (WHO); prevention of mother to child transmission (WHO); orphans and vulnerable children (UNICEF); young people (UNFPA); condom programming (UNFPA); education (UNESCO); injecting drug use (United Nations International Drug Control Programme); governance and development planning (UNDP); the world of work (ILO); and evaluation of HIV/AIDS programmes at country level (World Bank). In line with the decisions of the Programme Coordinating Board relating to expanded partnerships, many of these task teams will evolve into multi-stakeholder partnership forums in the coming months.

2. Engagement of other United Nations organizations

56. UNAIDS continues to work with a wide spectrum of United Nations organizations, encouraging their substantive involvement and leadership in their areas of expertise. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) is taking action on HIV/AIDS and agriculture; the World Food Programme (WFP) on HIV/AIDS and food security; the International Organization for Migration (IOM) on HIV/AIDS and mobile populations; and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) on internally displaced populations and refugees.

57. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) has drawn greater attention to the need to protect HIV-related human rights, including through resolutions of the Commission on Human Rights and through supporting the strengthening of national capacity in key areas.

58. The World Trade Organization addressed AIDS and access to medicines at its Ministerial Conference in Doha, in November 2001, and through its Council on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights. United Nations Volunteers (UNV) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) are working on plans to strengthen institutional capacity through the use of volunteers

and through providing credit for poor families affected by HIV/AIDS. The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) has, in collaboration with UNAIDS, developed an online resource centre that provides access to inter-agency publications, for example a resource guide to gender and HIV/AIDS.

59. The United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB), chaired by the Secretary-General, has further activated United Nations organizations, in particular to mobilize a system-wide response to the immediate humanitarian and food crisis in southern Africa, as well as on the longer-term development crisis in that subregion. Through its High-Level Committee on Programmes, numerous United Nations organizations and programmes, in addition to those already referred to, report stepped-up activities on HIV/AIDS. These organizations and programmes include the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Universal Postal Union (UPU), the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), UNIFEM, the United Nations Secretariat and the regional commissions.

60. The UNAIDS secretariat has also actively participated in other United Nations system coordination mechanisms, including the United Nations Development Group and the United Nations Inter-Agency Standing Committee on humanitarian affairs. Coordination and information sharing within the United Nations system was facilitated through the work of the Inter-Agency Advisory Group on HIV/AIDS, composed of 42 United Nations and related organizations, programmes and groups.

61. The United Nations agencies have increasingly recognized the need to address HIV/AIDS in their own workplace. In his reform agenda, the Secretary-General recommended that "a thorough review should be completed to ensure that the Organization's policy on HIV/AIDS is fully implemented".² Furthermore, the executive heads of the UNAIDS co-sponsoring organizations and secretariat have made specific commitments to address HIV/AIDS further in United Nations workplaces, including in the areas of HIV/AIDS personnel policies; health insurance coverage for the workforce; responsiveness of human resource departments to HIV/AIDS issues; and sensitization of senior management. Three global initiatives, the Inter-Agency Task Team on the World of Work, the Learning Strategy on HIV/AIDS and the Access, Care, Treatment, Inter-organizational Needs (ACTION) pilot project, are being implemented to carry out these commitments. In addition, the broader United Nations system, through the High-Level Committee on Management of CEB, is regularly considering the issue of HIV/AIDS in the United Nations workplace.

D. Tracking the epidemic

62. UNAIDS has increased its efforts to strengthen countries' capacity in monitoring and evaluation, particularly in relation to monitoring progress towards

² Action 33 of the report of the Secretary-General, "Strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change" (A/57/387).

full implementation of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals and the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS.

1. Progress in countries and at the regional level

63. The Programme Coordinating Board has called for UNAIDS support to country-led reviews of national AIDS programmes, in order to improve national leadership, ownership and capacity to respond to AIDS. In 2002 and early 2003, government-led reviews or joint reviews were carried out with the help of UNAIDS and United Nations theme groups on HIV/AIDS in several countries.

64. The UNAIDS secretariat Monitoring and Evaluation Reference Group plays a normative role in standardizing common indicators and building consensus for the development and use of these indicators. During the reporting period, the Group has reviewed the indicators developed in relation to the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS and the findings of the UNAIDS external evaluation; it is now focusing on establishing new sets of indicators, including in the areas of care, treatment and support to orphans. In addition, UNAIDS has established a Global HIV/AIDS Monitoring and Evaluation Support Team, housed at the World Bank, the primary focus of which is to coordinate and support country-level efforts in the areas of monitoring and evaluation, and to strengthen capacity in these areas.

65. The various partnership forums supported by UNAIDS have contributed to streamlining monitoring and evaluation efforts and to strengthening self-imposed accountability. For example, the International Partnership against AIDS in Africa has helped to implement African resolutions on HIV/AIDS through its Framework for Action, as well as to track progress achieved. These indicators were later merged with those developed to measure the Declaration of Commitment, in order to reduce duplication of effort at the country level.

2. Progress at the global level

66. The UNAIDS secretariat has worked with co-sponsors and other partners to prepare estimates of the epidemic and the response and to continue to provide quality information on the epidemic. The biennial report on the status of the epidemic and response, and the annual epidemic update are among the most appreciated of all UNAIDS publications.

67. WHO and the UNAIDS secretariat have continued to provide guidance on HIV/AIDS surveillance. New guidelines, *Implementing Second Generation HIV Surveillance Systems: Practical Guidelines*, along with CD-ROMs containing key surveillance tools and methods, were published in 2002 and widely disseminated.

68. UNAIDS has established a technical resource network on monitoring and evaluation, the members of which provide training and technical assistance to countries. A communication strategy for network members, including a web page on the UNAIDS web site, has also been developed. Over the course of the next year, UNAIDS will seek to strengthen the network by identifying local institutions that could play the role of network secretariats.

69. One of the key contributions of UNICEF to monitoring the epidemic is the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), a large population-based survey of social indicators for children (including child health, well-being, education and vulnerability) in 70 countries. The analysis of the 2000/2001 MICS data is currently

being finalized. The next round of MICS will be conducted in 2004. It will include extensive data on HIV/AIDS to contribute to monitoring the implementation of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS and the Millennium Development Goals and to targeting programme efforts at the country level.

70. UNAIDS is already the leading global source of information on the course of the epidemic. Efforts need to be reinforced, however, with respect to all aspects of the impact of and the response to HIV/AIDS, particularly in relation to national monitoring and evaluation capacities. UNAIDS initiatives such as the Country Response Information System and the Global HIV/AIDS Monitoring and Evaluation Support Team are major vehicles for such reinforcement. They need to be augmented with participatory reviews of national AIDS programmes, and monitoring and reporting on national and global progress towards meeting the goals and targets set out in the Declaration of Commitment. A substantial increase in monitoring and evaluation expertise at the country level remains an urgent priority for UNAIDS.

E. Mobilizing financial, technical and political resources³

71. As the international resource environment changes and new funding has become available (for example through the World Bank Multi-Country HIV/AIDS Program, the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, bilateral assistance and debt-relief processes) greater assistance is being requested by countries to refine cost estimates of the expanded response and to allocate and disburse resources.

72. Global HIV/AIDS spending in low- and middle-income countries has increased more than tenfold, from less than US\$ 300 million in 1996 to an estimated US\$ 3.5 billion in 2002. The latest estimates by UNAIDS indicate that \$10.7 billion will be needed by 2005 and \$14.9 billion by 2007. As recommended by the Programme Coordinating Board, the UNAIDS secretariat is facilitating the development of a multiparty global resource mobilization strategy to achieve an international consensus on financing the global response at the above-mentioned levels. In the process of developing the strategy, the complementarity of various institutional resource mobilization strategies will be ensured.

73. In 2002, the United Nations system provided US\$ 245 million in direct support for HIV/AIDS programmes at the country level and was the third largest external source of programmable funding for HIV/AIDS interventions (after bilateral programmes of the Governments of the United States and the United Kingdom). Through its Multi-country HIV/AIDS Program, the World Bank has thus far been the single largest multilateral source of funding for HIV/AIDS activities at the country level. UNAIDS is encouraging increased contributions from a broad range of Governments, foundations and corporate donors.

74. The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, which was established in January 2002, is providing significant additional funds for national HIV/AIDS efforts worldwide. As of March 2003, the Fund had received pledges of US\$ 3.4 billion. During the first two rounds, it approved a total of US\$1.5 billion in

³ As the mobilization of technical and political resources is addressed in other parts of the report, this section focuses on financial resources.

grants for AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria, 60 per cent of which is for HIV/AIDS. UNAIDS is providing technical and policy advice and support to the Global Fund and has provided extensive technical support to country level processes.

75. UNAIDS promotes national AIDS plans as a common framework within which all external assistance should be channelled (including that of bilateral donors, the World Bank and the Global Fund). In its December 2002 decisions, the Programme Coordinating Board encouraged the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development and other donors to link their bilateral country HIV/AIDS programmes to the execution of national strategies — in particular, their poverty reduction and development strategies — in order to reinforce the capacities of host Governments to coordinate international assistance on HIV/AIDS.

76. Finally, the UNAIDS Programme Acceleration Fund (PAF) has helped national partners support planning and proposal development efforts required to obtain external resources, including those from the World Bank and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. During the last two years, PAF has been refocused to support: programme planning and development; the strengthening of monitoring and evaluation efforts and capacities; and the reinforcement of partnership development and resource mobilization.

IV. Recommendations and proposed action for the Economic and Social Council

77. The Economic and Social Council may wish to consider the following actions:

(a) Endorsing the decisions taken by the UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board at its 13th meeting, in December 2002, which call on UNAIDS to: expand support to global advocacy and leadership initiatives; strengthen United Nations system performance and accountability at the country level; intensify support to the monitoring and evaluation of national AIDS programmes; and strengthen national capacity in key areas (for example, engagement of civil society, resource mobilization and tracking; human capacity development; improved provision of technical resources; and improved interventions relating to security, stability and humanitarian response);

(b) Endorsing the five cross-cutting functions applicable at all levels of UNAIDS set out in the decisions of the Board referred to above, namely: leadership and advocacy for effective action on the epidemic; strategic information required to guide the efforts of partners; tracking, monitoring and evaluation of the epidemic and actions responding to it; civil society engagement and partnership development; and financial, technical and political resource mobilization;

(c) Encouraging UNAIDS as well as the broader United Nations system to pursue full achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, as well as the goals and targets of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS;

(d) Commending UNAIDS as a positive, ongoing example of United Nations system reform and encouraging its further development in this regard,

including through: the sharing of experience and lessons learned, with broader efforts to harmonize planning, implementation and reporting on development assistance; support to periodic and comprehensive multi-stakeholder reviews of national AIDS programmes; the formulation of joint United Nations programmes to support national responses to HIV/AIDS; and more systematic reporting on the activities of United Nations theme groups on HIV/AIDS, through the annual reports submitted by the United Nations Resident Coordinators to the Secretary-General;

(e) Urging United Nations funds, programmes and specialized agencies, through the Resident Coordinators, to include the UNAIDS Country Coordinators as regular members in the United Nations country teams, in order to strengthen United Nations coordination against HIV/AIDS at the country level and better assist countries to mount and sustain effective expanded, scaled-up responses to HIV/AIDS;

(f) Commending UNAIDS for the continued, positive evolution of the unified budget and work plan, and urging all Governments, especially donors, to provide full funding for the 2004-2005 biennium;

(g) Urging the UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board and the governing boards of co-sponsoring agencies to develop closer links and more effective coordination to ensure that clear and effective guidance is provided to the UNAIDS secretariat and co-sponsors, including through the regular consideration of each co-sponsor's engagement in UNAIDS.



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The role of the Economic and Social Council in the integrated and coordinated implementation of the outcomes of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits

Report of the Secretary-General**

Summary

The present report analyses how the Economic and Social Council, building on the work of the General Assembly ad hoc working group, can promote an integrated approach to the follow-up and implementation of the outcomes of recent major United Nations conferences and summits. It contains suggestions on how the Council can fully use its segments to sustain progress towards internationally agreed goals and to address policy, coordination and operational aspects of common conference themes. Better preparations for the Council's work, engaging the United Nations system and other actors more broadly may help to strengthen its impact on the implementation of conference outcomes. The report also contains suggestions on how the Council can perform its functions in the follow-up to a number of recent conferences and summits. A number of proposals are put forward for enhancing the Council's dialogue and oversight of the boards of funds and programmes, improving further the contribution of functional commissions to conference implementation and developing the role of regional commissions in reviewing and supporting progress towards achieving the internationally agreed goals. The report also looks at ways to build a closer relationship with the specialized agencies and to foster partnerships and alliances with all stakeholders.

* E/2003/100.

** The present report was submitted three days after the submission deadline so that the outcome of the eleventh session of the Commission for Sustainable Development and the continuing work of the General Assembly working group on the integrated and coordinated follow-up to and implementation of the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic and social fields could be taken into account.



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I. Introduction

1. The 2003 coordination segment is an occasion for the Economic and Social Council to build on the outcome of the General Assembly ad hoc working group on integrated and coordinated follow-up to conferences and to help contribute to the realization of the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration.

2. The Council has made some progress, particularly since 1995, in facilitating integrated and coordinated follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits through consideration of cross-sectoral themes, enhanced interaction with other intergovernmental bodies, United Nations system organizations and relevant stakeholders and through the introduction of improvements in its working methods. Greater focus now needs to be given to seeking ways to maximize its impact on implementation and better engage national level actors and constituents.

3. Although the present report is being issued before the General Assembly working group on the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic and social fields completes its work, it should be read in conjunction with the outcome of the work of that group. The key recommendations of the working group that pertain to the Economic and Social Council will be made available to the Council.

II. Integrated and coordinated implementation

Role of the Economic and Social Council in the follow-up to internationally agreed goals

4. The Millennium Declaration and the outcomes of other major United Nations conferences and summits have outlined a comprehensive vision of development. The Economic and Social Council, as one of the bodies established under the Charter of the United Nations, with key responsibilities for economic and social development, must ensure that its work is oriented towards support for the implementation of conference outcomes, that is, to make their vision a reality.

5. The United Nations role in the economic, social and related areas gained renewed relevance with the major conferences and summits held since the 1990s. It is important to capture their inclusive spirit and visibility in the United Nations intergovernmental bodies, so as to keep the momentum created by these events. It is also important that United Nations intergovernmental bodies gear themselves to an "implementation mode" and work in a coherent way to support conference implementation. The Council is at the core of the response to these challenges.

6. The role of the Economic and Social Council is multifaceted, involving debates on major social and economic policy issues at its high-level segments. As the central mechanism for coordination of the United Nations system, it has a specific responsibility for system-wide coordination and for supporting an integrated and coordinated implementation and follow-up to conference outcomes. At its 57th session, the General Assembly once again recognized the Council's role in this regard.¹ The Council has also been assigned specific responsibilities for the follow-

up to individual conferences and summits. These include, under different arrangements which involve different levels of consideration within the Council and its subsidiary machinery, the Third United Nations Conference on Least Developed Countries, the International Conference on Financing for Development, the World Summit on Sustainable Development and the Fourth World Conference on Women. Furthermore, the Council provides overall guidance and coordination to the funds and programmes and to the operational work of the system at the country level, a role which should also be progressively geared towards advancing the integrated implementation of conference outcomes.

7. Through each of these tasks, the Economic and Social Council complements the work of the General Assembly, which is the highest intergovernmental mechanism for policy formulation and appraisal on conference follow-up.

8. Since 1995, the Council has promoted an integrated approach to conference follow-up by focusing on common themes of conferences at its coordination segment, an approach which has been endorsed by the General Assembly.² Enhancing further the Council's thematic approach and extending it to other segments may help to make its contribution to the integrated follow-up to conferences and to the Millennium Development Goals more visible and incisive.

9. In this connection, it is useful to recall that the General Assembly decided that the review process of the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals will be considered within the framework of the integrated and coordinated follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic and social fields.³ The Council, for its part, has affirmed its commitment to assist the Assembly in its overall responsibilities in follow-up to the Millennium Declaration.⁴ In 2002, it reiterated that, while each United Nations conference has its thematic unity, major United Nations conferences and summits should be viewed as interlinked, all contributing to an integrated framework for the implementation of the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration.⁵

A. Ensuring an integrated approach through thematic reviews

1. High-level segment

10. At its high-level segment, the Economic and Social Council plays an important role in providing political impetus for building areas of convergence,⁶ supporting and supplementing the policy development role of the General Assembly. The segment aims to address major topical themes related to economic and social policy as well as international cooperation in the economic, social and related fields. Over the years, it has addressed common themes of conferences (most recently human resources development) and cutting edge issues such as information and communications technology. The Council has effectively demonstrated its ability to engage high-level policy makers, the United Nations system and other actors.

11. The Council's one-day policy dialogue with heads of financial and trade institutions has a distinct role in comparison to the spring meeting of the Council with the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization (WTO). The spring meeting, as reconstituted after the International Conference on Financing for Development held at Monterrey, Mexico,⁷ is the occasion for intergovernmental

dialogue, not only with the Bretton Woods institutions, but also WTO, focused on coherence, coordination and cooperation in implementing the broad agenda agreed upon at Monterrey. The one-day policy dialogue is the occasion for the Secretary-General and the heads of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and WTO to discuss important developments in the world economy and international development cooperation, providing a significant opportunity to discuss the impact of the world economic situation on the realization of internationally agreed development goals. Focusing the one-day policy dialogue on these issues would also enable the Council to ensure that there is a close link between its work on the follow-up to Monterrey and to the World Summit on Sustainable Development, as requested in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation⁴ adopted at the Summit.

2. Greater thematic unity

12. A clear message from the General Assembly working group has been the need to centre the Council's annual session around one broad theme. This has increasingly been the case in recent years, when the themes of the high-level segments, including "Information and communication technologies", "The role of the United Nations in supporting African sustainable development", "The contribution of human resources development, including in the areas of health and education, to the process of development" and "Promoting an integrated approach to rural development in developing countries for poverty eradication and sustainable development", have provided a link through several segments and across the particular themes to which those segments were devoted.

13. As stated before, such a thematic focus would enable the Council to make a more visible contribution to the integrated implementation of conferences and summits, in both policy and operational aspects. It would enable the Council to use the convening authority of the high-level segment to mobilize decision makers, the United Nations system and a range of other actors. The political momentum of the high-level segment would give strong authority to the programmatic and operational guidance of the Council, so that the Council, through its other segments, could have an impact on the work of the United Nations system and its operations.

14. As a first step in this direction, the Council decided, in 2002,⁹ that the high-level and coordination segments would focus on the same cross-sectoral conference theme (or related themes), but would address it from policy development and coordination perspectives, respectively. Likewise, the operational activities segment could address the same theme or a related theme, for example, through specific panels or dialogues structured in more operational terms.

3. Predictability for greater impact

15. A key measure of the Council's performance is its capacity to have a durable impact on the work of the United Nations system at large and on the policy makers that determine the thrust of its policies and activities. This issue must be addressed if the Council is to maximize its contribution to conference implementation.

16. One way to strengthen the relevance of the guidance provided by the Council, and thus its impact, is through more intense preparations. The work of the Council should be prepared through an in-depth collaborative process involving experts and practitioners from within and outside the United Nations system. Experience and

ideas from national and regional implementation practice also have to be fed into the process. The functional commissions and regional commissions should also contribute through substantive debate and the exchange of national experience.

17. In order for the work of the Council to mobilize such preparations, it is important that there is predictability in its work. The idea has thus emerged that the Council should adopt a multi-year work programme to guide its work for the coming few years. The Council could use common conference themes as a reference for choosing the topics of its high-level, coordination and operational activities segments. These themes should take into account the Millennium Development Goals and the common conference themes identified by the Secretary-General in 1995.¹⁰ Synchronization with the work of functional commissions and other important reviews would be useful.

18. At the same time, the timeliness of the Council's interventions and guidance is crucial if they are to have a significant impact on policy development and implementation. To that end, it is essential to maintain a degree of flexibility in the work of the Council to enable it to take up at short notice major economic or social issues requiring political attention or a coherent United Nations response. A number of mechanisms enable it to do so. The high-level segment may choose a second theme, in the event that a matter of high urgency emerges that would qualify as a theme for that segment. Likewise, the coordination segment may take up an additional theme dealing with concrete sectoral issues, as the Council did in the past with water or human settlements.¹¹ The Council may give further consideration to convening issue-oriented meetings that can address new and evolving issues outside the regular session.

4. Coordination segment

19. During the coordination segment, the Economic and Social Council looks at the work of the United Nations system focusing, increasingly, on a cross-cutting common conference theme. Following its agreed conclusions of 1995, the Council focused on common themes drawn from the conferences held till then. There is a need to update and develop the common themes, taking into account recent conferences, in particular, the Millennium Summit, the International Conference on Financing for Development and the World Summit on Sustainable Development. In general the engagement of United Nations system organizations is considered at the high-level segment. United Nations system organizations, the specialized agencies, funds, programmes, and the regional and functional commissions need to be engaged more actively in the coordination segment and its preparation, in order for it to fulfil its function during the implementation phase of conference outcomes.¹²

20. A challenge for the future will be to mobilize more systematically the Bretton Woods institutions and WTO in the work of the segment, in view of the importance of finance and trade for the implementation of other conference goals.

21. To carry forward the momentum of the Monterrey, Johannesburg and other conferences, the Council also needs to engage non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the private sector in the coordination segment, its preparation and follow-up. The creation of the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force in 2000 is a powerful example of the kind of tools that the Council can use to maximize its impact. The role of the Council in launching similar kinds of

partnerships to implement conference goals in other areas is discussed below (see sect. C.6).

22. The Council could also invite one or several lead agencies to coordinate actions to implement its guidance given in the context of the coordination segment. To ensure a sustained impact, follow-up actions should be reported back to the Council, preferably at the coordination segment, either the following year or two years later, so as to leave more time for implementation. Alternatively, implementation could be reported back to the particular commission more directly involved with the issue.

5. Operational activities segment

23. In recent years, the operational activities segment has devoted panel discussions with United Nations country teams to a cross-cutting theme or to the theme of the high-level segment. These panel discussions could be held more systematically in the future, in order to give greater thematic unity to each session of the Council, as discussed above. In addition, other panels are organized, both at high and technical levels, on themes identified by the Council as central to the discussion on the operational activities segment. These themes could also be given special attention in the work of the boards of funds and programmes and in the reports of the boards and of the heads of funds and programmes to the Council. Likewise, they could be addressed in the dialogue with heads of funds and programmes.¹³

6. General segment

24. During the general segment, the Economic and Social Council reviews and guides the work of its functional and regional commissions, including their work on the follow-up to conferences. Coordinating the work of functional commissions and ensuring complementarity, effectiveness and efficiency of their work is one of the key tasks of the Council in the integrated follow-up to conferences. Further measures are required to improve the way the Council discharges this role at the general segment.

25. In 2002, the Economic and Social Council stressed that the outcome of the work of the functional commissions should be considered in the general segment on the basis of their reports and on the consolidated report on their work. That report should identify cross-cutting policy issues, gaps/overlaps, and areas of complementarity and cooperation. It could contribute to the integrated and coordinated follow-up to United Nations conferences and summits by focusing the analysis on the work of the functional commissions in the follow-up to and implementation of conference outcomes and on the theme chosen by the Council as the focus of its relevant session. The report could be discussed by the Council in informal consultations prior to its substantive session, in preparation of its examination of items related to the work of functional commissions.

26. The Council could also consider further measures to improve the structure of its agenda and the treatment of agenda items assigned to the general segment. Last year, the Council decided that items considered in the general segment should be streamlined, in particular by transmitting to the General Assembly items more appropriately considered by the Assembly and avoiding addressing the same issues in more than one segment, unless specifically decided.¹⁴ Accordingly, the Council decided to examine issues related to integrated and coordinated conference follow-

up at its coordination segment, with the general segment focusing on individual conferences.

27. With regard to specific agenda items, items 7 (Coordination, programme and other questions) and 8 (Implementation of General Assembly resolutions 50/227 and 52/12 B) could be reviewed and methods identified for addressing these agenda items more effectively.

28. In addition, the Council could discuss the reports of functional commissions on drugs and crime as a distinct cluster, as compared to social development or the advancement of women.

29. The work of the general segment would benefit from increased interaction between the Council and the regional and functional commissions. This could be achieved, inter alia, through organizing panel discussions featuring the chairpersons of the regional and functional commissions during or in preparation of the general segment.

7. Specific steps required from the Economic and Social Council in the follow-up to individual conferences, within the context of an integrated approach

30. The Economic and Social Council decided to examine the implications of the outcome of the Johannesburg Summit in its future discussions on the integrated and coordinated follow-up to an implementation of major United Nations conferences and summits.¹⁵ The Johannesburg Plan of Implementation⁸ called for greater involvement of the Council in sustainable development-related work and outlined the role it could play in the follow-up to the World Summit on Sustainable Development. The Council, as the central mechanism for the coordination of the United Nations system and its specialized agencies and supervision of subsidiary bodies, could:

(a) Enhance its role in overseeing system-wide coordination and the balanced integration of economic, social and environmental aspects of United Nations policies and programmes aimed at promoting sustainable development;

(b) Organize periodic consideration of sustainable development themes in regard to the implementation of Agenda 21, including the means of implementation. Recommendations in regard to such themes could be made by the Commission on Sustainable Development;

(c) Make full use of its high-level, coordination, operational activities and the general segments to effectively take into account all relevant aspects of the work of the United Nations on sustainable development;

(d) Promote greater coordination, complementarity, effectiveness and efficiency of activities of its functional commissions and other subsidiary bodies that are relevant to the implementation of Agenda 21.

31. Periodic consideration of sustainable development themes by the Council should enable it to carry out the functions assigned to it by the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. Recommendations for specific themes to be addressed could be made by the Commission on Sustainable Development, and/or be derived by the Council from the programme of the work of the Commission for the period after 2003. As a further means to strengthen the follow-up process of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, the Council could promote the implementation of the

decisions/recommendations of the Commission through the executive boards of the United Nations funds and programmes. In the same context, the outcomes of the work of United Nations Development Group in the follow-up to Johannesburg could also be brought to the attention of the Council.

32. Regarding the Monterrey Conference, the Council needs to consider how its spring meeting with the Bretton Woods institutions and WTO can best complement its policy development work and its dialogue with these institutions on the world economy during the high-level segment and with the work of the General Assembly high-level dialogue on financing for development. In future years, it would be important to ensure in-depth substantive preparations for the spring meeting through the early selection of a theme and more intensive interaction between the Council members and the executive boards of the Bretton Woods institutions and the relevant intergovernmental structure of WTO. Greater intergovernmental preparations would help identify actions to be jointly agreed at these meetings on coherence, coordination and cooperation. Multi-stakeholder groups, in coordination with the institutions concerned and other partners and stakeholders, could also make an important contribution.

33. The Council could devote a part of its regular session's high-level segment, for example one session during the policy dialogue on the first day, to addressing, in a round table or panel format, financing issues related to the theme of the high-level segment, with the participation of the finance and trade institutions and other stakeholders. The Council could also mandate the Committee on Development Policy to examine new and emerging issues related to financing for development and to submit its recommendations to its high-level segment. The Council could thus help link the finance, trade and sectoral aspects of the high-level segment theme and promote a more coherent and integrated policy response to those aspects at all levels.

34. The Council has also been invited to devote a coordination segment before 2005 to review and appraisal of the system-wide implementation of its agreed conclusions 1997/2 on mainstreaming the gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system and a high-level segment before 2005 to the follow-up to the Third United Nations conference on least developed countries.

Recommendations

The Council may consider:

(a) Deciding on the themes that it will address at its high-level and coordination segments over the coming few years, taking into account the recommendations of the General Assembly working group and the outcomes of recent major United Nations conferences;

(b) Addressing issues related to the theme of the high-level segment at its operational activities segment in coming years;

(c) Fully using its one-day policy dialogue with heads of financial and trade institutions to discuss the impact of the world economic situation on internationally agreed development goals and devote a part of the high-level segment, for example one session during the policy dialogue on the first day, to addressing in a round table or panel format, the financing issues related to the

theme of the high-level segment, with the participation of the finance and trade institutions and other stakeholders;

(d) Inviting the United Nations System Chief Executives' Board for Coordination, boards of funds and programmes and relevant United Nations system organizations to consider, as appropriate, the theme of the high-level segment as it relates to their areas of competence, and to provide contributions to the Council's segments every year; request the Committee for Development Policy to meet early in the year; and address new and emerging issues related to financing for development and their linkages with the theme of the high-level segment and make recommendations to the Council;

(e) Preparing the work of its coordination segment through interactive debates, expert group meetings or expert forums convened, *inter alia*, by the regional commissions and relevant specialized agencies;

(f) Inviting one or several lead organizations to promote implementation of its guidance at the coordination segment, including a report back to the Economic and Social Council the following year or two years later at the coordination segment;

(g) Requesting that the consolidated report on the work of the functional commissions highlights policy and coordination issues emanating from the work of the functional commissions on the theme(s) addressed by the Council and invite the functional commissions to address the link between the theme(s) and their own areas of concern. In this regard, consideration needs to be given to integrating and relating the Council's theme(s) with the multi-year programme of work of functional commissions.

B. Functional commissions

35. The functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council have a primary role in the follow-up and review of the implementation of conference outcomes. The commissions, many of which attract high-level participation, have a considerable impact on policy issues in their areas of concern and help maintain the focus on such implementation. Both the General Assembly and the Council have called upon them to enhance their role as the main forums for expert follow-up and review of major United Nations conferences and summits.

36. Some commissions have undertaken a major effort to improve their working methods. For example, the World Summit on Sustainable Development gave impetus to an in-depth reflection on the changes needed in the functioning of the Commission on Sustainable Development. As a result, at its eleventh session, the Commission decided that its work would be organized as a series of two year action-oriented implementation cycles, which will include a "Review session" and a "Policy session". The former will review progress in implementing the outcomes of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, the five year reviews of the Conference and the World Summit on Sustainable Development. In the policy year, the commission will take policy decisions on practical measures to overcome obstacles to implementation identified during the review year. To ensure a long term perspective on sustainable development, the Commission also adopted a programme of work for a number of cycles in the next decade, providing guidance

for the development of a more effective system of reporting to the Commission, and for enhancing the contributions of the United Nations system and major groups. The Commission also decided to strengthen implementation at the regional level, particularly through the regional commissions of the Organization.

37. A number of these avenues appear to be promising ways to focus the work of other functional commissions on implementation and to further enhance their effectiveness. In particular, the functional commissions should enable an interactive exchange of views and experiences, best practices and lessons learned, involving a larger number of stakeholders. In the case of some commissions, enhancing the focus on implementation might require lessening the frequency of negotiated agreed outcomes and addressing fewer themes at each session. The work of the commissions should be expanded through regional meetings, expert groups and analytical studies. It should benefit from up-to-date reports on implementation and inputs by national Governments, United Nations country teams and other actors. Such a preparatory process would bring about better linkage between global deliberations and regional and national implementation.

Recommendation

- **The Economic and Social Council could address specific recommendations to its functional commissions on how to further enhance the impact and effectiveness of their work relating to conference follow-up, taking into account the recommendations of the working group of the General Assembly.**

C. Focus on implementation

38. The integrated implementation of conferences requires a better link between policy development at the intergovernmental level (the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, the functional commissions, and the executive boards of funds and programmes) and the operational work undertaken at the country level by the funds, programmes and specialized agencies of the United Nations system, the Bretton Woods institutions and other relevant institutions. In addition to fully using the General Assembly and inter-agency coordination mechanisms, the Council, as the main coordination body for the United Nations system, needs to play a more effective role in guiding and reviewing implementation to ensure coherence and coordination in the integrated follow-up of United Nations conferences. The Council's future work should contribute to greater policy and institutional coherence, providing clear guidance that can directly impact and sustain follow-up processes and effectively engage national constituencies.

39. The Millennium Development Goals have created new opportunities for convergence on goals and principles and coordination of action. While the Goals do not encompass all conference goals and commitments, together with the Millennium Declaration, they provide the United Nations system with a useful framework for addressing gaps, clarifying responsibilities and promoting mutually reinforcing actions among organizations of the system. Much of the work already being undertaken by the United Nations system at the country level is supportive of the conference goals and targets. The challenge lies in focusing the greater convergence of the United Nations system, including the Bretton Woods institutions, on priorities

in their respective country programmes, coordination strategies and partnerships, while upholding the principles of national ownership, capacity development and reduction of transaction costs, as well as the need to enhance their results-oriented focus.

1. Boards of funds and programmes: improving dialogue and oversight

40. A coherent approach to integrated conference follow-up requires that the work of the executive boards be consistent with the overall policy guidance of the General Assembly and the system-wide coordination and guidance of the Council in implementing the policies of the Assembly for integrated conference follow-up. A closer link needs to be built between the Council and the executive boards of funds and programmes to support a coherent effort to pursue the Millennium Development Goals and operationalize the policy guidance of the Assembly and the Council in the area of integrated conference follow-up.

41. The Council, in its resolution 1998/27, made specific requests to the executive boards of the United Nations funds and programmes, and to their executive heads, to report to the Council on issues related to conference follow-up, cross-sectoral coordination and the consolidated list of issues for improved coordination of operational activities.¹⁶ However, more needs to be done in order to maximize the contribution of funds and programmes to integrated conference follow-up at the operational level.

42. So far, the majority of the reports from the United Nations funds and programmes to the Council have been more informational than analytical and the role of the Council has been limited to taking note of those reports. This is, *inter alia*, a function of the agendas of the executive boards, including those of their joint meetings, which are not necessarily focused on the issues upon which a policy dialogue with the Council could most effectively take place. Nor do they provide a proper basis from which the Council could provide policy guidance. In addition, there are inadequate linkages between the work of the executive boards and that of the functional commissions of the Council.

Recommendations

The Council may wish to:

(a) Request the executive boards and the executive heads of the funds and programmes to ensure that their reports to the Economic and Social Council serve as instruments of policy dialogue with the Council, in particular on the work of funds and programmes relating to the integrated follow-up to conferences. The reports could provide an analysis of operational and implementation issues and obstacles, highlighting specific issues for the Council's consideration. These might include aspects relating to the work of the executive boards, especially in the areas that go beyond the specific mandates of each organization;

(b) Propose, to the same ends, more intensive consultations between the bureaux of the Economic and Social Council and the executive boards;

(c) Invite the United Nations funds and programmes to make better use of the consolidated list of issues to improve coordination of activities¹⁷ as a way to seek guidance from the Council regarding integrated conference follow-up.

2. Regional commissions: guiding and using their work on implementation and follow-up

43. The regional commissions have been given specific mandates for the follow-up to the major global conferences, and they have an important role to play in this regard. Following the completion of its review of regional commissions mandated by the General Assembly,¹⁸ the Council, in its resolution 1998/46, provided guidance to the regional commissions for improving their contributions in the reform process of the United Nations. In the same resolution, the Council recognized the dual role of the regional commissions as outposts of the United Nations and as the regional expression of the Organization. It stressed the need to link their work more effectively with the overall activities of the Organization. The Council also invited the regional commissions to further strengthen their active participation relating to the implementation at the regional level of the results of major United Nations conferences and summits. The Council's guidance took into account (a) the convening power of the regional commissions to bring together different categories of development actors (Member States, regional and subregional organizations, NGOs and the business community); (b) their capacity to organize events at which countries can share common concerns and expectations, exchange experiences and discuss a wide range of policy issues; (c) their multisectoral nature, placing them in a good position for promoting cross-sectoral approaches; and (d) their direct contact with national statistical offices, offering a good basis for monitoring progress achieved through comparable data series and indicators.

44. Since then, the regional commissions have been strengthening their role in linking global deliberations with regional implementation measures, while continuing to support subregional and regional integration and consensus-building. The role and experience of the regional commissions have been amply demonstrated and have received recognition at recent United Nations conferences and summits. At the World Summit on Sustainable Development, in particular, it was emphasized that its outcome documents should be implemented at the regional level. The significance of a regional perspective in the future work of the Commission on Sustainable Development was also underlined at the Summit. The Johannesburg Plan of Implementation stresses actions at the regional and subregional levels, through the regional commissions and other regional and subregional institutions and bodies, and assigns a range of functions to the regional commissions.

45. At its recent session, the Commission on Sustainable Development invited the United Nations regional commissions to contribute to its work, notably by organizing regional implementation meetings, in collaboration with its secretariat, other regional and subregional organizations and regional offices of United Nations system organizations. Those meetings are expected to contribute to the implementation of Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation and to provide input to the Secretary-General's report for the deliberation of the Commission. They would also provide opportunities for the participation of major groups.

46. The potential contribution of the regional processes to the integrated follow-up to conferences at the global level is yet to be fully exploited. In addition to assessing the achievement of internationally agreed goals at sessions of the commissions, other formats for regional reviews would be feasible, including special events, possibly held back to back with the sessions of the commissions or of their relevant

subsidiary committees. The regional commissions could also be brought more systematically into the consultation process for determining cross-cutting themes to be addressed at the global level, in order to assess how the commissions could best provide their contributions. Synergies, complementarity and cross-fertilization should be maximized between work at the regional and global levels. The meetings of the regional commissions need to address themes of specific relevance to each region and to take into account global level concerns, common themes of conferences and regional diversity.

47. The regional commissions could also enhance their role in sharing national experiences and lessons learned among all partners, and in identifying regional priorities, perspectives and areas of concern. In particular, they could look at selected cross-cutting themes that require more regional coordination and attention. They could also pursue programmes of a cross-sectoral nature where action at the regional and subregional level would be cost-efficient and have an added value.

48. Integrated and coordinated implementation at the regional level requires more effective inter-agency cooperation and coordination. The inter-agency regional coordination meetings could provide instruments to promote cooperation and build partnerships within the United Nations system. In this regard, the Economic Commission for Africa continues to work towards greater United Nations coherence as the system's key interlocutor with African countries on the New Partnership for Africa's Development. A common regional assessment report coordinated by each regional commission (similar to the common country assessment) would also facilitate the building of a regional development framework for the United Nations agencies working at this level and could be a good platform for joint programming and common databases and knowledge networks.

49. In addition, the regional commissions could work with the United Nations funds and programmes at the national and regional levels to strengthen the operational activities through a coordinated approach. In the light of the important role of the regional commissions and other regional bodies in implementing the conference outcomes, their contribution should be reflected in the work of the functional commissions.¹⁹

50. The regional commissions have strategic advantages for intersectoral and multi-stakeholder dialogues at the regional level. They could further promote regional partnership with the civil society and the private sector, especially in areas where more regional cooperation and attention are required.

Recommendations

(a) **The Economic and Social Council may wish to stress the role of the regional commissions as a regional focal point for monitoring and assessing the progress made towards the achievement of these internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, bearing in mind regional priorities;**

(b) **The Council may wish to encourage regional commissions to further strengthen their capacity and profiles to fully implement the above role;**

(c) **Regional commissions should address selected commitments cutting across several United Nations conferences during their sessions at special**

events or at meetings organized back to back with their respective sessions, and report thereon to the relevant intergovernmental bodies;

(d) The Council may wish to invite the regional commissions to contribute to the theme of its high-level segment;

(e) The Council may wish to request strengthened coordination between the regional commissions and regional programmes of United Nations entities, the specialized agencies, the Bretton Woods institutions and regional development banks. This should involve the regional coordination meetings established by Council resolution 1998/46. A common regional assessment report should be prepared by each regional commission, in consultation with the regional offices of all United Nations system organizations active in each region. The assessment report would serve as a basis for a regional development framework for inter-agency cooperation at the regional and subregional levels, including joint programming, common databases and knowledge networks. In this regard, the role of the regional coordination meetings should be strengthened. Integrated follow-up to global conferences should be a recurrent item on the agendas of the regional commissions;

(f) The Council may wish to encourage greater cooperation between the regional commissions and its functional commissions, through for example, convening regional meetings on relevant issues and the adoption of regional plans of action;²⁰

(g) The Council may wish to request the regional commissions to enhance their role in supporting the achievement of internationally agreed development goals through strengthening their following functions:

- (i) Promoting economic, social and environmental dimensions of development in their own work;
- (ii) Supporting such an integrated approach in other regional and subregional processes;
- (iii) Providing for exchange of experience, best practices, case studies and partnership development;
- (iv) Assisting in the mobilization of technical and financial assistance for the effective implementation of regional and subregional programmes and partnerships related to the achievement of internationally agreed goals;
- (v) Further acting as regional forums for multi-stakeholder dialogues involving all relevant actors, including NGOs, academic circles and other major groups.

3. Building a closer relationship with the specialized agencies and inter-agency bodies

51. A closer link should be built between the governing boards of United Nations system organizations, the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the functional commissions to promote a consistent approach on conference goals and Millennium Development Goals. To this end, thematic linkages could be built into the agendas and work programmes of those bodies. The organizations of the United Nations system also need to ensure that they have functioning programmes to

effectively support implementation of conference commitments and the Millennium Development Goals. The quantified targets of the Millennium Development Goals also need to be translated into effective systems for monitoring results.

52. To this end, closer and more systematic interaction between the Economic and Social Council and the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination and its machinery will need to be devised to maximize mutual reinforcement to ensure that the United Nations system organizations effectively support the implementation of conference commitments through their programming frameworks. The policy guidance role of the Council should rely on the support of mechanisms such as the High-Level Committee on Programming, the United Nations Development Group and the resident coordinator system for its implementation at the global, regional and country levels.

53. The High-Level Committee on Programming has been focusing its contribution on harnessing the capacity of the United Nations system in support of the follow-up to the Millennium Declaration. It has sought to enhance its role in ongoing global and country-level monitoring processes and in the development of inter-agency strategies to maximize the system's support to countries in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. The Committee gives particular attention to enhancing the system's capacity to effectively sustain country-level action and to reporting and on the need for capacity-building in data collection and analysis in developing countries. The Committee can thus play an important role in strengthening the link between what the system does at the global and country levels and the guidance provided by the Council.

54. As part of the Millennium Development Goals strategy on operational activities, the members of the United Nations Development Group are restructuring their country work to conform to the Goals as part of a results-based approach to development. The United Nations country teams, led by the resident coordinator, will support the preparation of the reports on the Goals.

55. Building on the innovative and productive modalities of cooperation that developed among agencies in the run-up to the Monterrey conference and the Johannesburg summit, the Council could serve as an effective development cooperation forum, engaging the participation of high-level policy makers from developing and developed countries, as well as other relevant interlocutors from the United Nations system and non-United Nations entities.

Recommendations

(a) To ensure that conference goals are integrated and operationalized into the work programmes and the country level work of organizations, a closer interaction between the Economic and Social Council, the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination and the High-Level Committee on Programming should be devised in order to ensure that organizations effectively support the implementation of conference commitments through their programming frameworks;

(b) The United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination and the United Nations Development Group should continue their support to the pursuit of Millennium Development Goals and provide concrete guidance to

their member organizations in order to intensify synergies among conference goals and facilitate an integrated approach to conference follow-up;

(c) The United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination should also be invited to contribute substantive inputs to the policy analysis regarding the common themes that the Council addresses for integrated conference follow-up.

4. Focusing on action at the country level

56. Country-level efforts to harmonize the United Nations development system's support to integrated conference follow-up should not ignore the framework of the individual institutional mandates, competencies and accumulated experiences of the organizations of the system. However, there are a number of circumstances in which the programmes, funds and the specialized agencies of the United Nations system, together with the Bretton Woods institutions and other institutional actors should and do adopt a coordinated approach in supporting national efforts towards the achievement of conference goals and targets at the country level.

57. In its agreed conclusions 2000/2, the Economic and Social Council encouraged further progress to integrate conference outcome implementation into country assistance programmes. It reaffirmed that the resident coordinator system has an important role to play in assisting Governments and enhancing United Nations system coordination, including through the establishment of thematic groups on cross-cutting conference themes and the full utilization of collaborative programming frameworks, in particular the common country assessments and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework, to support, at the request of Governments, the development of national strategies and action plans for integrated and coordinated conference follow-up.²¹

58. The support given by United Nations country teams to conference implementation at national levels has become more coordinated and integrated than in the past. Good practices can be found in theme group activities, such as joint analysis and assessment of a country's progress in achieving conference goals; thematic assessment as a basis for policy dialogue with the Government and other national partners; and area-based integrated/joint programmes on cross-cutting issues such as poverty eradication. Theme groups have proven to be key vehicles for country-level coordination, in particular when there is a direct involvement of all development partners, including national Governments, the World Bank, civil society and bilateral donors. However, some concerns have been raised about the proliferation of thematic groups in some countries, which increases the time spent on coordination rather than on programme activities.²²

59. With regard to national reporting on conference follow-up, the Council may wish to reiterate that the organizations of the United Nations system are encouraged to continue and deepen their efforts to avoid duplicative requests for national reports and to share with one another information obtained through national reports, thereby limiting information requested from Governments; and that the relevant secretariats prepare, in a collaborative manner, harmonized and simplified formats that may be used by Governments in preparing information on a single subject or a cluster of subjects.²³ The country reports on the Millennium Development Goals prepared with national leadership and ownership are an important element in this regard.

Recommendations

The Council may wish to:

(a) Invite all funds, programmes and the specialized agencies of the United Nations system to continue their efforts to pursue an integrated approach in conference follow-up at the country level, ensuring that common country assessments and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework, as well as similar frameworks, including poverty reduction strategy papers where relevant, designed to coordinate operational activities are formulated as mechanisms geared to a more intensified integration of conference outcomes;

(b) Reiterate that United Nations system organizations are encouraged to renew their efforts to avoid duplicative requests for national reports and to support the country reports on the Millennium Development Goals for that purpose.

5. Strengthening the relationship with the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization²⁴

60. A particular effort will need to be made to make more effective use of the mechanisms for cooperation with financial and trade institutions, as envisaged in both General Assembly resolution 50/227 and the Monterrey Consensus adopted at the International Conference on Financing for Development.

61. Useful forums should be provided to business interlocutors and civil society representatives in preparing for: the Economic and Social Council spring meeting with the Bretton Woods institutions; the General Assembly high-level dialogue; and meetings with the multi-stakeholders of the Commission on Sustainable Development. Outcomes of these forums should focus on civil society's contribution to the implementation of conference outcomes and ideas/suggestions on how the Council can help.

Recommendation

- The Economic and Social Council could have a more intensive interaction with intergovernmental counterparts in the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization in preparation for the Council's spring meeting with them in order to develop shared approaches and a common understanding on policies and actions in the implementation of conference outcomes and to focus attention on results, leading to action-oriented discussions and outcome at the meeting.

6. Creating partnerships and alliances with all stakeholders

62. Institutional stakeholders, advocacy and interest groups, business and other major groups as well as research and academic institutions inject dynamism to the intergovernmental process. Their presence brings media attention and promotes realization of the organization's "We the peoples" character. Monterrey, Johannesburg and other United Nations conferences and summits have been vital sources of innovative arrangements to enhance partnership and alliance-building with non-state actors. Non-state actors need to be integrated into the follow-up mechanism to ensure effective partnership with Governments and international

organizations in the implementation phase. The innovative modalities of cooperation established in the preparation of Johannesburg and Monterrey must be built upon in the follow-up phase.

63. While respecting the essential intergovernmental and multilateral character of the Organization, the deliberative processes can facilitate the building of alliances for action around key goals and commitments, modelled along the lines of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization, the Global Fund for HIV/AIDS, the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research and the United Nations Information and Communication Technologies Task Force. Meetings should be seen more as events culminating an intense preparatory process leading to the launching of actions by Governments and partners.

64. Arrangements need to be devised to ensure that the partnerships launched during the World Summit on Sustainable Development serve to advance in a concrete and sustained way the follow-up to Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. The Commission on Sustainable Development is working on the follow-up to the partnerships launched at the Summit, including sharing lessons learned, progress made and best practices. The partnerships keep the Commission informed about their activities and progress in achieving their targets.

65. A consistent effort must be made by the United Nations system to engage all relevant stakeholders in the countries, using to the best the comparative advantage of each. Diverse participation should be encouraged, especially from developing countries, and the involvement of NGOs should be increased, including through regional/national networks. The United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination could also help promote enhanced collaboration with the private sector, NGOs and other parts of civil society. New ideas may emerge from the panel of eminent persons established by the Secretary-General.

Recommendations

(a) **The Economic and Social Council could hold forums with a broad range of development partners on issues related to implementation in a specific area in order to launch and sustain new partnership initiatives and alliances;**

(b) **The Economic and Social Council could encourage diverse participation, especially from developing countries, and the involvement of NGOs in the integrated and coordinated implementation of conference outcomes, including through regional/national networks.**

Notes

¹ See General Assembly resolution 57/270.

² General Assembly resolution 50/227, annex I, paras. 36 and 57.

³ See General Assembly resolution 57/144, para. 7.

⁴ Resolution 2001/21.

⁵ See agreed conclusions 2002/1, para. 4.

⁶ General Assembly resolution 45/264, annex, para. 5 (d) (i).

⁷ *Report of the International Conference on Financing for Development, Monterrey, Mexico, 18-22 March 2002* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.02.II.A.7).

⁸ *Report of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg, South Africa, 26 August-4 September 2002* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.03.II.A.1 and corrigendum), chap. 1, resolution 2, annex.

⁹ Agreed conclusions 2002/1, para. 6.

¹⁰ E/1995/86, para. 57.

¹¹ General Assembly resolution 50/227.

¹² The new link with the theme of the high-level segment should help to mobilize the system, as should the decision to choose a theme "including on new and emerging issues, which will add value to international efforts to achieving internationally agreed development goals" (see agreed conclusions 2002/1).

¹³ According to agreed conclusions 2002/1, the dialogue "should be on thematic and coordination issues related to operational activities on options and measures aimed at improving coordination and improving the performance of funds and programmes in the implementation of [conference outcomes]" (para. 18).

¹⁴ Agreed conclusions 2002/1, para. 20.

¹⁵ Agreed conclusions 2002/1, para. 8.

¹⁶ Resolution 1998/27, paras. 1, 2 and 4.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, para. 4.

¹⁸ General Assembly resolution 50/227.

¹⁹ Resolution 1998/46, para. 41.

²⁰ Resolution 1998/46, annex III, para. 16.

²¹ Agreed conclusions 2000/2, para. 20.

²² E/2002/47, para. 35.

²³ Agreed conclusions 2000/2, para. 13.

²⁴ This subject is addressed in the reports presented to the operational activities and general segments.